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T W E N T Y
S E R M O N S.

The first NINE of them

P R E A C H E D

Before the KING in L E N T.

Of Superstition.
Of contending for the Faith.
Of Judging one Another.
Of the true Use of the World.
Of the Love of Pleasure.
St. Paul's Discourse to Felix.
Of Consistency in Religion.
No continuing City here.
Christ's Yoke Easy.
Of Persecution.
Of Zeal not according to
Knowledge.
The Impossibility of serving
God and Mammon.

The Ambition of Christ's
Disciples reprov'd.
The different Characters of
John Baptist and Jesus Christ.
The Extremes of Riches and
Poverty.
The Good Samaritan.
Of our Duty under Afflictions.
The Christian Race.
The Best Christians unprofi-
table Servants.
The Nature of Christ's Bless-
ing.

By BENJAMIN, Lord Bishop of *Winchester*.

L O N D O N,

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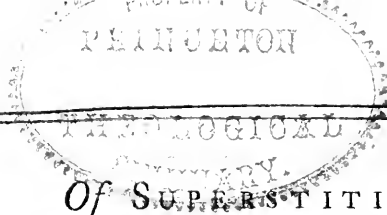
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Of SUPERSTITION.

S E R M O N I.

Preached before the KING, *March 23,*
1717-18.

A C T S XVII. 22.


Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars-hill, and said, Ye Men of Athens, I perceive that in all things Ye are too Superstitious.

SUPPOSING the Word *Superstitious* to SERM. I.
 answer exactly to the *Word* in the *Original*;
 yet, it does not seem rightly translated here by the Expression *too superstitious*: because this carries along with it an Implication that there is a Degree of *Superstition*, not at all blameable; and that *St. Paul* in this Passage allows it; contrary to the constant Use of that Word amongst Us, in a *bad* Sense. The *Greek Word* for that Temper of Mind, relating to Religion, from which the *Athenians* are in *our Translation* denominated *Superstitious*, signifies a *Dread* of some *Superior Being*, or *Beings*; and commonly, an *Unreasonable, Blind, and Gloomy, Dread* of such Beings, lead-
 B ing

SERM. ing to great and various Absurdities, about the

I. Methods of pleasing Them. And as the Word, used by St. Paul, implies in it a *Comparison* of the *Athenians* with *Others*; and therefore ought to have been translated, *more Superstitious than ordinary*; or the like: I think, the *Apostle* may be truly represented as speaking thus to *Those* around Him, — “Ye Men of *Athens*, I perceive
 “ that you are more thoroughly possessed with
 “ the *Fear* of Invisible Beings *Superior* to Us,
 “ than I have found any *Others* to be. And
 “ this I conclude, from what I have observed
 “ of the public Marks of your *Worship* appear-
 “ ing in the *City*. For, besides your Altars to
 “ numberless *Deities* with Names to them, in
 “ which you agree with *Others*, all around
 “ you; I found an Altar inscribed to the *Un-*
 “ *known God*: which uncommon Appearance
 “ must be owing to a very extraordinary De-
 “ gree of a dark, and uncomfortable *Dread* of
 “ some Superior Being, though you know not
 “ what: Whom you fear you may otherwise
 “ be thought to have neglected,” &c.

But, as it is my present Design to take Occasion from the Words of the *Text*, as they stand in *Our Translation*, to speak in such a manner upon the Subject of *Superstition*, as may be of general Use, and Service, to All *Christians*, in the great Affair of True Religion; I shall not enter farther into any *Critical Enquiries*

ries about the precise Meaning of the Words in S E R M. the *Original*; or the *whole Intention* of *St. Paul*, I. in this Discourse: but shall endeavour, 

I. To say Something about the *Nature* of *Superstition*, considered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

II. To point out the True *Remedy* of it. And,

III. To apply what I shall have said, to *Christians*, and to the present State of *Christianity* in the World.


I. I will endeavour to give you some Account of the *Nature* of *Superstition*, considered as a Vice, to be avoided by All.

And, this having been much the same, both amongst Those who have not lived under any express *Revelation* from God, and Those who have; the *General Account* of it must, I suppose, be given, entirely with Relation to that *Faith*, that *Worship*, and that *Practice*, to which, both these Sorts of Persons might see themselves to be truly and strictly obliged, as their *Religion*, and *Duty*.

With respect therefore, to *Heathens*, the best Account I can, at present, think of, is this; That the *Superstition* of *Heathens* consisted in every Particular, which either their *Fear*, or their *Folly*; either the Strength of their *Imagination*, or the Weakness of their *Judgment*; or the *De-*

SERM. *sign* and Artifice of their *Leaders*; taught them
 I. to embrace, in order to please any Being, or
 Beings, superior to themselves, whom they
 made the Objects of their Religious regards:
 Every thing, I say, of this Sort, whether relating
 to their *Faith*, or to the *Nature* or *Manner* of
 their *Worship*, or to the *Practice* of their *Lives*;
 which was contradictory or disagreeable to
 the just Notions in such important Matters,
 which were then, and ever are, and ever will
 be, the certain and plain Result of the Com-
 mon Reason of Mankind, exercised upon such
 Subjects. *This* it was, that was to be their
 Conductor in *Religious* Affairs; and therefore,
 it is by comparing it with what their *Reason*
 ought to have led them to make their *Religion*,
 that you must judge what it was that the *Super-*
stition of the *Heathens* consisted in.

And thus it was that St. *Paul* judged of
 the *Superstition* of the *Athenians*, with regard
 to their *Worship*: as is plain from his Dis-
 course to Them. He saw, amongst many
 others, an Altar dedicated to the *Unknown God*;
 and this he concluded to have been raised by
 their *superstitious* Fear, and blind *Dread*, of
 They knew not what: when, at the same
 time, They ought to have argued, from the
 Works of Nature, in every Year, and Season,
 and Day, That the Supreme God and Go-
 vernour of the World, had made Himself Suf-
 ficiently

ficiently *known* to Them, as the sole Object of S E R M. Religious Worship, by these *Works* of his, I. which were always before their Eyes. 

2. Agreeably to this, the *Superstition* of *Christians*, considered as *Christians*, the Followers of *Jesus Christ*, as a Teacher sent of GOD, must consist in *every Particular*, which any Persons, called *Christians*, have added, or may add, to the plain and express *Declarations* of their *Lord* and Master himself; under the Notion of something necessary to our pleasing and serving GOD: whether it respect the *Object* of our *Faith*; the *Object* or *Manner* of our *Worship*; or the *Conduct* and *Practice* of our *Lives*.

The Difference, in this case, with regard to *Heathens* and *Christians*, you will see, to be very small, in the End: because it was the Great Design of our *Lord's* appearing in the World, utterly to destroy the whole Fabric of *Superstition*; to restore the Dictates of *Uncorrupted Reason* to their *Force* and *Authority*; and, by calling the World to believe in *Him*, as sent by *God*, to replace the only Method of pleasing Him, upon that *True Foundation*, upon which it ought to have been placed, whether He had appeared amongst Men, or not.

So that the *Difference* between *True Religion*, and *Superstition*, seems to be this; that the *Former* is the *Argument* of the Judgment and

S E R M. Understanding, collecting, from the just Notions of a GOD, enforced upon *Christians* by the plainest *Declarations* of their *Master*, the only possible Method of pleasing Him: and the *Latter* is the Result of uncontrolled Passion; either the *Hope* of pleasing God with something entirely distinct from, and contrary to, those Notions; or the uneasy *Fear* that He will not be pleased, without the *Addition* of something which has no Relation to them.

We may therefore, as we pass, observe that *Superstition*, in some Respects, is *That* to *Religion*, which, in common Life, the *Flattery* of a false Tongue is, to the *Sincerity* of *Conversation* and *Friendship*. *Flattery* takes the Place, and often the very Aire and Mien, of sincere Profession. It puts itself instead of *Friendship*; and hopes to be taken for it. It is made up of pleasing Sounds, and Expressions: and the *Appearance* is of something good. But then, it is founded upon a Baseness of Soul; hoping to please, or fearing to displease, without any thing *within* answering to those Professions. And, in the End, the Evil is, That, when the *Masque* is, by some Accident, taken off; the Reproaches which are due only to the *Falseness* of such *Pretences*, are cast, by such as are not able well to distinguish, upon the sincere Professions of *Friendship* itself, which it only imitated.

And,

And, in the same manner, *Superstition* hath thrust itself into the Place of *Religion*; and is become an *Idol*, to which the greater Part of the World hath long continued to bow down: And, having usurped, not only the *Place*, but the *Garb* and *Language*, of *Religion*; no great wonder that, in all Ages, both in the *Heathen* and *Christian* World, the *Scandals*, occasioned by the *Former* only, have been put to the Account of the *Latter*; and the *Evils* which the *Madness* of *Superstition* alone hath produced, have been *all*, in general, charged upon *Religion*, which in its true Nature tends to prevent them: nay, that the very Word *Religion* hath come to stand for that *System* of *Superstitions*, whatsoever it be, which has prevailed in any *Country*, or *Society*. But to return,

The principal thing to be regarded, under this *first* Head, is, That every Particular, embraced as something necessary to the pleasing of *GOD*, which is not plainly declared to be so, either by the Voice of *Reason*, or the *Words* of the *Gospel*, is the *Superstition* of *Men*, and of *Christians*; whether it relate to *Faith*, *Worship*, or *Practice*. But the *next* great Point is,

II. To point out the *true Remedy* of this immense and deplorable Evil: an Evil, so much the more difficult to be cured, as it is

S E R M. founded upon the Passions of Men; and flatters
 I. those Inclinations, which Custom and Education have made strong. This, it is plain, must be a *Remedy*, suitable to the Nature, and first Principle, of the *Evil*. And, the *Evil* consisting in departing from one certain steady Rule; the proper *Remedy* must consist in the reducing Men to that Rule, from which they ought not to have departed. I shall now, therefore, propose what the *Gospel*, as it is represented by *Christ* and his *Apostles*, professes and designs to do, in order to this. And then we shall judge whether any thing can be more reasonable in itself, more beneficial to Mankind, or, consequently, more honourable to the *Gospel* itself.

You may easily see what this is, even by *St. Paul's* Conduct in this *Chapter*. At the 22^d verse, he takes Notice of the Great *Superstition* of the *Athenians*; and, at the 23^d and following verses, he proposeth to them, as the only Cure for it, *first*, the Knowledge of that One God, whom alone they ought to worship: *Then*, the Nature of that *Worship* which is due to such a Being, not confined to, or dependent upon, particular Places, or Circumstances; but suitable to the Nature of a *Being*, always and every where present with us: *Then*, the Necessity of *Repentance*, that is, of altering whatsoever was bad in the Conduct of
 their

their Lives; for which he urgeth this ARGU-S E R M.
 ment, that the GOD, whom he preaches to I.
 Them, as *known* by his Works, is the same
 God, who will *judge the World*, by *Jesus Christ*,
whom he raised from the Dead, as a sensible
 Assurance of this Truth. Here then St. *Paul*
 represents to them *Religion*, instead of their
 former *Superstition*, under the Notion of *know-*
ing, and *worshipping*, *One God*, the *Maker*, the
Governour, the *Judge*, of the World; and of
 practising all that is good and praise-worthy.

You see, therefore, that *True Religion*, which
 is, in the Nature of Things, (and I wish I
 could say, in *Time*, a great deal) more antient
 than the *Corruption* of it, is, *Virtue* in all its
 Extent, regularly practised and pursued, under
 the Sense of the supreme Being, the *Creator*,
Governour, and *Judge*, of the World. And
 this is That to which St. *Paul*, and his Fel-
 low-Labourers, were constantly calling back
 the World of *Unbelievers*; and pressing upon
Believers also.

And all this is perfectly agreeable to what
 our *Saviour* himself, in plain Words, proposed
 upon many Occasions, through his Life, with
 respect to *Faith*, to *Worship*, and to *Practice*.
 With regard to *Faith*; He declares, in *one* of his
Prayers to God, his *Father*, that it was the
 Knowledge of Him, the *only true God*, which
 He

SERM. He was endeavouring to bring the World to,
 I. by calling them to believe in Himself, sent by
 that *True God*. With Respect to *Worship*, He
 had an Occasion offered, in his Conversation
 with the Woman of *Samaria*, to declare, that
 this *Worship* was not to be confined to any such
 Circumstances, as particular *Places*, or the like;
 but must be agreeable to the Nature of the
 Being worshiped; that the *Father*, (for he
 speaks all along of *Him*) was then seeking
 such *Worshippers*, as would not worship what
 they knew nothing of; or, would not worship
Him any otherwise, than in *Spirit and Truth*.
 And then, as to the Conduct of Life, and
Practice; his *Declarations*, in general, are all
 referred to the *Nature*, and *Attributes*, of the
Supreme Father of all Things; to the doing
his Will; to the imitating *his Perfections*;
 and to the practising every thing recommend-
 ed by that *Law of Reason*, which He sent our
 Lord to revive and enforce.

For, in this last Particular of *Practice*, it
 is evident, that neither our *Lord*, nor his *im-*
mediate Disciples, have framed any *exact Sys-*
tem of Morality, explicitly mentioning every
 particular *Duty*, or *Sin*; but have thought it
 better to appeal, in most Instances, to the
Great and Universal Law of Reason, which they
 send every *Christian* to consult, with Sincerity
 and

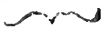
and Uprightness of Heart, as he will answer S E R M.
it at the Great Day of Accounts.

But in the Case of *Worship*, in which the Inventions and Follies of Men had shewn themselves wantonly and infinitely various, to all the Degrees of *Superstition*; He took occasion to be a little more particular. In that *Prayer* which he taught his *Disciples*, He leads his Followers to the *Object* of their *Worship*, GOD, under the most easy, and the most intelligible, Notion of a *Father*: including every thing relating both to *Authority* and *Goodness*; and representing Him to us as our Great *Maker*, *Governour*, and *Benefactor*. He then goes on to the *Matter* of our *Prayers*, in a Manner so plain, and in Expressions so far removed from every Word, that either supposes any *Passion* within, or can be designed to raise one, that it is well worth while for Us all to consider, and imitate it, by speaking to God, agreeably to *his* Nature, and *our* Relation to Him; and expressing our Sentiments before Him, more with our *Understanding*, than with our *Passions*. And certainly, whatever is the Result of the *Understanding* is likely to last, and to have an Effect upon our Minds and Lives: But *Passion*, raised for a present Occasion, and then naturally ceasing, can hardly be thought to leave the Mind

more

SERM. more guarded, and better armed, for the Con-
 I. duct of our *Practice*, than it was before. And
 this I mention, and press, in a very particular
 Manner, because I think it of the utmost Im-
 portance, that the Duty of *Prayer*, which is
 the Worship of the Great God, should not, by
 the Operation of *Superstition*, become, in the
 Opinion and Practice of any *Christians*, the *Art*
 of raising a present Passion, upon a present Oc-
 casion; instead of the most likely Method of
 forming the lasting Habit of a Disposition to
 all that is Good; and the Expression of Those
 Sentiments, which alone ought to be expressed
 before God. But, to return,


As *Worship*, and *Practice*, must depend
 upon *Faith*, and *Knowledge*; and, as the *Super-*
stition of *Worship* and *Practice* must depend
 upon the *Superstition* of *Faith*; so the Cure of
 this must begin at the *Foundation*. And ac-
 cordingly, the Design of the *Gospel* is to re-
 claim Men from the *Superstition* of *Worship*
 and *Practice*, by recalling them to the *Belief* of
 the *One Supreme God*, whose Nature shews
 both how He is to be *worshiped*, and how He
 is to be *served*. But, as I have observed, with
 regard to *Practice* in general, that the *Gospel*
 doth not draw up a *Formal System* of the
 Bounds and Nature of every *Virtue* and *Vice*;
 but sends all Men to the original Univer-
 sal

fal Law; and refers them to the Imitation of S E R M.
 God: so, it may be remarked, that in those 1.
 Cases of *Practice* itself, in which *Imagination* 
 and *Passion* might be supposed to have most
 Scope, the greatest Care hath been taken to
 guard against the ill Effect of them. For In-
 stance, the Love of GOD, and the Love of
 our Neighbour, which are spoken of, in the
 New Testament, as *Duties* to which all Men,
 of all Tempers and Dispositions, are *equally* ob-
 liged; are so plainly described, that every
Christian may see, that Whosoever *keeps the*
Commandments of GOD, (which always sup-
 poses the Belief and Knowledge of his amia-
 ble Perfections,) will be esteemed by his
 Judge to *love* GOD truly; and that He who
worketh no Evil to his Neighbour, but all the
 Good in his Power, is truly possessed of that
Love of his *Neighbour* which is the *fulfilling*
 the *Law*, as far as Social Life is concerned:
 and may from hence make himself easy, if he
 cannot boast of those extraordinary Emotions,
 or Practices, which some *Others* speak of; but
 which, at least, cannot be said to be made
 the *Duty* of *All*, by their great Law-giver.
 This seems to have been designed against
 the *Superstition* of *Practice*; as it was ta-
 king the Workings of the heated Imaginations
 of Men, as much as possible, out of the Reli-
 gion

SERM. gion of their Lives. It was removing, out of the
 I. Account, every Thing, which might create
 in *Some*, the *superstitious Hope* of pleasing God
 with something, which He has never insisted
 upon; and in *Others*, the *superstitious Fear* of
 displeasing him, for want of it: And found-
 ing *Religion* upon something which *All* Men
 can find their Part in; and not upon Any
 Point, which the differing *Tempers* and *Dis-*
positions of Men make impossible to *All*, in a
 Matter made equally the Duty of *All*. No-
 thing, indeed, in the *Dispensation* of *Christ*, re-
 lating to *Practice*, appears to be designed, or
 framed, to excite in the Soul, *within*, any
 Thought leading to Practical *Superstition*; but
 every Part of it conspires to form a regular
 Conduct of Life, *without*.

You see, then, how rational a *Remedy* the
Gospel, in its Purity, proposeth, to cure the
 World of *Superstition*; by calling All Men to
 a *Worship*, and to a *Practice*, worthy of God,
 and worthy of Man: and to rid the Minds of
 Men of unconceivable Uneasinesses, by placing
 the Service of GOD upon Principles agreeable
 to the *Judgment* and *Conscience*, upon which
 alone inward *Peace* depends.

I know of nothing set up, in Opposition to
 this, but *Atheism*, or a *total Infidelity*. And
 this, if it be thoroughly imbibed, which is
 hardly

hardly possible to suppose, will indeed, rid SERM.
 the Mind of any *Superstitions* relating to the I.
 pleasing that Great Being, which it banishes 
 out of the World. But then, there are two
 or three Considerations, which I have not
 time to enlarge upon, but which will be of
 great Force, at the bare Mention of them:
viz. that *Atheism* is itself founded upon a
Contradiction to all the Principles of *Science*, in
 the World: That, though it may rid the
 Mind of *some Superstitions*, yet, it gives no
Support in the room of them: That it is, it-
 self, where it is pretended to be, often seen to
 be accompanied with very odd and unaccount-
 able *Superstitions*, of another sort; and some
 of them very uneasy ones: and, lastly, what
 is very material, That, in *most* Nations of the
 World, They, who seem to have Recourse to
 it for *themselves*, have so little Love to the
 Happiness of their *Fellow-creatures*, that they
 think Them fit for nothing but to be governed
 by the Tyranny of *Superstition*; and that,
 wherever it lies within their Reach, They are
 so far from any Willingness to enter into any
 Measures of abating the *Terrors* and *Dreads* of
 it, that they rather are induced the more to
 continue, and improve, the Force of those
 superstitious Terrors upon Others, by their
 own *Atheism* and *Infidelity*.

The

SERM. The *Gospel*, with a more generous and noble Spirit, labours with the *Lowest* as well as the *Highest*, the *Meanest* as well as the *Brightest*, Understandings, to bring Mankind, by a few plain, easy, general Principles, common to all, from the Oppression and Unhappiness of *Superstition*; both to know truly, and to practice constantly, what is necessary to their pleasing God. This is a Point, which it is evident, from the Experience of all Ages, and from the vast Variety of Inventions of Men upon this Head, of infinite Importance to the Ease and Quiet of their Lives here, as well as to their Happiness hereafter. And therefore, it was a Matter, worthy of the *Son of God's* Appearing in the World: and it is what He hath performed in a Manner agreeable to the Nature of God, and to the Frame of the Mind of Man. And now, as I propos'd in the last Place,


III. I come to the Application of what has been said, to *Christians*, and the present State of *Christianity*. And this is too plain, and obvious, to need many Words.

It is an easy Matter for Men to see, and complain of, *Superstition* in Others. It is easy for the *Church of Rome*, loaded with the *Foppery* of *Ceremonies* without Number; distracted with the Variety of *Objects of Worship*; full of


new-invented Methods of pleasing God, by I SERM. know not what Bodily Austerities, instead of I. the one Austerity of Virtue; and guarded round about with all the *Allurements* of this World's Pomp and Dignity, on one Side, and all its *Terrors*, on the other: It is an easy Matter, I say, for a *Church*, so at ease within its own Fences, to sit and make great Outcries against the *Superstition* of the *Pagans*; and to send out their *Missionaries*, to disturb and molest Them, only to engage them to exchange *One* set of *Superstitions*, for *Another*, I greatly fear, as wicked and as destructive.

It is easy, again, for Those who have reformed from that *Church*, to spend their Time and Breath, in *Invectives* against *Romish Superstitions*; or, amongst Themselves, in complaining of one another. But the true *Point* of Thought, in which every *Christian*, and every distinct *Body* of *Christians*, should fix, is, what is their own Case? and what is their own Conduct, with respect to the *Three* great Points of *Faith*, *Worship*, and *Practice*?

If they set up any *Beings*, as *Objects* of the *same Faith*, but That proposed by *Christ* himself, The *One* only supreme God; They do by this lay the Ground-work of *Superstition*, in themselves, and others. If they pay the *same Worship* to any Being, distinct from that same

SERM. *One Supreme Being*; or, if they multiply the
 I. *invisible Objects* of any Degree of *Religious Res-*
 *pect*, beyond the Authority of what is written;
 leading Men to spend the Vigour of their Souls,
 due to the Worship of the One Supreme God,
 upon a Number of *Objects*, inferior to Him:
 This is the *Superstition of Worship*, from which
 their Master called the World. Or, if they
 confine the *Acceptableness* of the *Worship* of
 GOD, to any particular *Places*, or *Ceremonies*, or
Words, or *Forms*; This is also a *Superstition*,
 contrary to the Nature of that *Worship*, the
Acceptableness of which our Lord Himself
 placed upon *Spirit* and *Truth*.

And again, if They take upon them to make
 the *Favour of God* to depend upon any thing,
 besides what our Lord declared it to depend up-
 on; representing GOD to be delighted with
 Trifles, or reconciled by Follies; encouraging
 Men to hope for his Favour, upon their Per-
 formance of something distinct from the keep-
 ing his Commandments; or leading Men to
 fear his Displeasure, for not having added an
 exact Observation of what Men have instituted
 in Religion, to what He himself hath de-
 clared to be sufficient to Salvation: This is the
Guilt of Superstition, with regard to *Practise*;
 to be charged upon All, who have any hand
 in it.

It is apparent from the Nature of this Evil, S E R M.
 That no Cure for it can be hoped for, till the I.
Kingdom of Christ shall be established amongst 
Christians; and his own Subjects acknowledge
Him, by their Practice, to be their *King*.
 And, When *Christ's* Authority is once suffered
 to settle the *Faith* and *Worship* of *Christians*;
 when Obedience to *His* Commands, under the
 Conduct of that Faith, is suffered to pass for
Religion; when the Rule of every *Christian*
 Man's Conduct is universally allowed to be
 his sincere Attention to the Directions of *Christ*;
 and *Christians* are so upright as to take That
 for their Religion, which they find recom-
 mended by their Lord, and his immediate Fol-
 lowers: *Then*, and *Then* only, the *Faith*, and
Worship, and *Practice*, of *Christians*, will justly
 be said to be all restored, and redeemed from
 the Follies of *Superstition*. But till this happy
 Time comes, How great and deplorable an Un-
 happiness must it be thought, that the very
Believing in *Jesus Christ*, which was proposed
 to put a stop to all the *Superstition* in the World,
 should, by the crafty Designs of some, and
 the Weakness of others, be itself made the
 Inlet and Occasion to that *same Evil*, amongst
Any that are called by that Holy Name; and
 to so shameful a Degree, as We see it to be,
 in many Nations round about us.

SERM. Nothing, I am persuaded, is wanting, but
I. to uncover the Face of our most *Holy Religion*:
and then, there can be little Doubt, but that
It's most dangerous *Rival*, and powerful *Enemy*,
must fly before it; and that *Christianity* will
at length get the better of the *Superstition* of
Christians, as it did at first of the *Superstition*
of *Heathens*.

Of contending for the FAITH.

S E R M O N II.

Preached before the KING, *March 13,*
1719-20.

Epistle of JUDE, Verse 3. latter Part.

It was needful for Me to write unto You, and exhort You, that Ye should earnestly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered unto the Saints:

IN order to find out the Nature of what is very strongly recommended to *Christians* in these Words, I propose, SERM.
II.
~

I. To explain the *Words* themselves.


II. To observe from thence by what Methods we can most effectually answer the real first Design of them. And,

III. From the Whole, to draw such Observations,

S E R M. I. I. Observations, as may convince Us of the Iniquity, and Folly, of pretending to answer their Design by other and contrary Methods.

I. The *Words* ought to be explained. And this Explanation ought to be taken from the plain Purport of the whole short *Epistle*, in which they are; from the *Time* when it was written; and from the *Circumstances* of *Christianity*, and of *Christians*, at that *Time*. The Duty, here recommended to *Christians*, is to *contend earnestly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints*; that is, in the Language of the *Apostles*, to all who professed themselves *Christians*: the *Title* of *Saints* not being, at that *Time*, appropriated to particular Persons; but, in common, given to All *Christians*, to put them in mind of their *Profession*, and what *Obligations* to *Holiness* it carried along with it. This *Faith*, here to be contended for, was the *Faith* taught and delivered, before this *Epistle* was written; being spoken of here, as already known and settled. The Expression of *contending earnestly*, *Ἐπαγωνίζεσθαι*, is taken from the *Contests*, *Games*, and *Races*, then in Use in the *Heathen* World; in which the *Contenders* for imaginary Glory strove, with all their *Might*, against their *Adversaries*. But, as amongst these *Contenders*, there were certain *Rules* and *Orders*,

by

by which They were all to be governed in SERM.
 their *Contests*; upon pain of forfeiting all Pre- II.
 tense to Victory or Reward, if they transgres- 
 sed one of those *Rules*, which were the *fixed*
Laws of those *Contests*: So, the *earnest* *Conten-*
tion of *Christians*, for the *Faith* once deli-
vered, must be governed by those *Rules*,
 and kept within those *Bounds*, and directed
 by those *Laws*, which their Great Master,
 the *Judge* of the *Contest*, has declared and
 established.

If any one, who entered into the *Contests*,
 or *Games*, then common in the Heathen
 World, pretended to get the better, *i. e.* to
 overcome, hurt, or destroy, his Adversary,
 by any Method, contrary to the *Laws* fixed
 by the *Governours* or *Judges* of those *Con-*
tests; He was not adjudged to have the *Glory*
 of *Conquest*, but the *Shame* of *Injustice*. And
 so, in the *Christian Contest*, if *Christian Me-*
thods are not uniformly and constantly made
 use of; the *Earnestness* of the *Contention* is
 only a so much greater Deviation from the
 Duty of a *Christian*. One *Christian* may
 crush or oppress the Person of Another, a-
 gainst whom He contends, on Account of
 some Differences in Religion: But he cannot
 contend for *the Faith* once delivered, so as to
 reap any Fruit of such Contest, without con-

S E R M. tending in the *Methods* prescribed by *Christ*
 II. himself. This is in *general*.

But, in *particular*, If we consider this *earnest Contest for the Faith*, here recommended by *St. Jude*, in conjunction with the *Circumstances* with which *Christians* were then surrounded; the *Methods* of *Contest* could be none but such as were suitable to those *Circumstances*. They had not then in their hands the *Weapons* of this *World*, to lance at one another: And therefore, the *Weapons* of their *Warfare* could be *then* no other than *spiritual*. They were all surrounded with persecuting *Unbelievers*: and probably, one *Part* of this *earnest Contention* for their *Faith*, here recommended to them, (if not the main *Part*,) was the entering into that *Contest*, and *Strife*, of *Suffering* for this *Faith*, which *Others*, in this *Epistle* are described as willing to decline. This, I say, was *One* Instance of the *earnest Contest* here proposed; the enduring *Difficulties*, the running that *Race* of *Sufferings*, mentioned in the *Epistle* to the *Hebrews* (and styled there *Αγων*) the *Suffering* on Account of this *Faith*, and by the powerful *Assistance* of it: Not the *Fury* of *Zeal*, in bringing *Others* to *Corporal Sufferings*, for the *Sake* of what *They* believed; but the *Constancy* of *Patience* in suffering themselves for what *They* knew

knew to have been *delivered to them* by their S E R M. Master and Saviour. And this Sense will not II. be at all disagreeable to the Word in the *Original*; or the *Circumstances* of *Christians* at that Time; or to the rest of the *Epistle*: in which some Men amongst *Christians* are described as Wicked Perverters of the Gospel; and ready to deny the *Faith* They professed.

But, if we take the Word as implying merely a Contest for the Faith against these *Primitive Adversaries*, here mentioned, as crept in amongst *Christians*; We cannot help observing how they are described all through this short *Epistle*: Not, as honest *Enquirers* after Truth, but as wicked *Perverters* of the whole Design of *Christianity*: Not, as Persons willing to receive that *Faith*, which had been *delivered to the Saints*; but, as wilful Opposers of what they might have known to have been so *delivered*: Not, as Persons ready to lay down their Lives, or suffer all worldly Inconveniences, for what, after their best Inquiries, appeared to them to have been the *true Faith* of *Christians*; but, as Persons ready to renounce what they would otherwise pretend to profess, for fear of Worldly Sufferings.

This Circumstance will likewise teach *Christians* the *Measure*, the *Temper*, and the *Bounds*, of their *Contests* about their mutual Differ-

SERM. ences in some Points of *Belief*, at this great
 II. Distance from the original Delivery of the
 ~~~~~ *Christian Faith*: For, in what Men soever  
 the *Marks* of unfeigned *Sincerity* are found,  
 though but equal to Those which we may  
 suppose in Others; and especially, if there be  
 good ground to believe a Readiness and Reso-  
 lution to suffer for what They apprehend to be  
 Truth; and but as great a Probability of *their*  
 suffering under the *Persecution* of *Unbelievers*,  
 if any such should be, as there can be that  
 any *Others* will have Constancy enough to do  
 it: And, much more still, if they give Proof  
 by the whole Tenor of their Lives, of their  
 real *Faith* in *Jesus Christ*; and actually re-  
 nounce, upon any just Occasion, many of the  
 Comforts and Supports of this World, for the  
 Sake of what they think to be His Will: I say,  
 upon these Suppositions, the Characters and  
 Descriptions in this *Epistle* are not adapted nor  
 designed for such Men; nor are these the Per-  
 sons against whom *Christians* are alarmed and  
 forewarned in the *Text*.

But, granting that all such professed *Chri-  
 stians* are here comprehended, as do truly,  
 or are supposed to, err in Points of *Faith*;  
 what is the *Remedy*, or the Method proposed to  
*Christians*, in this Case? It is a plain one, and  
 was very easy in those early Days: No other  
 than,

than, in all their Contests about such Matters, SER M.  
 to keep themselves strictly to the *Faith*, which II.  
*had been*, before this, *delivered to the Saints.* ~~~~~  
 This leads us to the

II. *Second Enquiry* I proposed, *viz.* by what Methods we can most effectually answer the real original Design of these Words.

The *first* Observation which here naturally offers itself, is, That, in order to *contend earnestly* for the *Faith delivered to Christians*, before this Epistle was written, we must find out what that *Faith* was, which was then actually and compleatly delivered. And this will necessarily engage us to ask, where *We* shall seek for it, who live so many Ages from that Time? And what can we answer to this, but that we must seek for it in those Books, in which alone it is to be found; which were either writ *before* this Epistle; or by Persons of that Age, empowered to deliver this *Faith*; not to be suspected of Error in their Delivery of it, and enabled to prove their Commission to the World: who, therefore, must be allowed to *deliver the same Faith*, without any Variation or Contradiction. To this plain, and only satisfactory Method, I am sensible there are many *Adversaries*, and many *Objections* raised.

There are some *Christians*, (and a very numerous

S E R M. merous Body of Men they are,) who know  
 II. no other Guides, but the living Guides of  
 the present Church; and acknowledge no  
 other *Faith*, for the Faith *once delivered to the Saints*, about *Seventeen Hundred Years* ago, but that which is *now* delivered to them by their *present Rulers*, as such. One Part of These, and much the greater, take a very short Method of establishing this Point; and That is, by first laying down the *Infallibility* of the *Present Church*, and of every Man of the past Ages, through whose Mouth, or by whose Hands, the present *Traditions of Faith* have all descended to them. And this, indeed, would be a very good Method, if that single Point of *Infallibility* could be proved.

But this is a *Point* so gross, and so utterly void of all Proof, that a great Body of the *Christian World* have broke loose from the Power of this Monster. And, in order to This, they had no other way but to declare for the *New Testament* itself, as the only *Guide*, or *Rule of Faith*; the only *Deliverer* of this *Faith* to *Us* of later Ages. And This is the very *Rule*, I have now laid down. But, when This comes to be put in Practice; too many of the same Persons who have set it up as the *Only Guide*, turn round on a sudden, and let us know that They mean by it, not those



those Sacred Original Writings themselves, but S E R M.  
 the *Interpretations*, or *Sense*, put upon them II.  
 by Our Spiritual *Superiors*, to which We are  
 sometimes said to be obliged, and bound in  
 Duty to submit; and sometimes are allowed a  
*Liberty of Examination*: but in effect, put un-  
 der an Obligation to find *That* to be *Truth*  
 which is taught by these Leaders:

Upon *this* Head, there is again as great a  
 Variety of Judgment, as there is amongst  
 Others about the *Seat of Infallibility*. Some-  
 times, we are asked, whether we ought not  
 to pay a regard to Those whose Business, and  
 probably sincere Study, it is, to find out the  
 Truth; and to dispense it to Us? Yes, un-  
 doubtedly; the Regard of serious Attention,  
 and the Respect of a due Examination of  
 what They affirm: but not the *Submission* due  
 only to *Infallibility*. Shall we not submit *our*  
 low Understandings to the higher Understand-  
 ings of Others? or shall we pretend to oppose  
 Our Judgments to Those of our *Superiors*, in  
 Matters of this Kind? Let these, and the like,  
 Questions be asked concerning the *Christian*  
*Laity*, in *all the Popish*, and *many of the Pro-*  
*testant*, Countries: and Those of *our* Church will  
 unanimously answer, No: The Rule is quite  
 otherwise. Nay, with regard to the *Refor-*  
*mation*, it has been long ago, with one consent,  
 said,

SERM. said, that it was a glorious thing not to submit  
II. to the *Voice of Any Men*: but to reserve that  
~ Regard, for *God*, and for *Christ*, in Matters of  
*Faith* once delivered to the *Saints*.

And, again, It is asked by others, Is there not a surer way of knowing what was *delivered* about *Seventeen hundred Years* ago, than by going Ourselves to those Books which are acknowledged by All to have been *then* written? Shall we not take that *Original* Faith more securely from the *Councils of Grave and Good Men*, met together, perhaps *Hundreds*, of Years afterwards, for the settling that *Faith*; or from the Writings of particular ancient *Doctors*? To which it must be answered, That the Judgment of These ought to have its *due Weight* with All who can come to find out what that Judgment was: that but its *due Weight* is only such as it ought to have, after it shall be compared with the Declarations of the *first Writings*, to which it almost always professes to conform; and into which, at last, all the Weight must be resolved: That the Wisest and Greatest of these Men, supposing them incapable of deceiving Others, yet were very capable of being deceived Themselves: That they very often differ from one another, and sometimes from themselves; and that They cannot give so good an Account of

the Faith contained in the *Original Books*, as SERM.  
 the *Books Themselves* which contain it. II.

The *Question* now before Us may be soon and effectually resolved by asking, Which is the best and securest Way of knowing exactly what the Doctrine of *any particular Church*, suppose the *Church of England*, delivered at the Time of the *Reformation*? Whether by consulting the Writings of particular Divines, many Years *after* that Period; or Any Assembly of them at this Distance; or from the *Authentic Acts*, and Declarations, and *Sermons*, made and recorded at the very Time We are enquiring after; and explained by all the Helps from *History* and *contemporary Writings*, which we can procure? For this *Instance* is very proper to clear up what I have been saying, as it will prove to Us, beyond all Contradiction, That the Doctrine, even of a particular Church; and a Doctrine recorded and set down in as accurate a Manner, as was thought necessary for the avoiding Diversity of Opinions; *That* even such a Doctrine may, in *Fifty Years* time, come to undergo some *Alterations*; and, in a few Years more, to be entirely changed, in the Writings and Discourses of most of the Members of the same Church. I mean particularly the Points of Doctrine, called the *Five Points*, relating to *Justification*, and God's Decrees,

SERM.

Decrees, and the like: which were at first  
 II. esteemed as *Fundamental*, and even *Essential*,  
 to the Church of *Christ*, as any others can be;  
 And yet have been at length much changed by  
 gradual Alterations. For, as the Writers and  
 Explainers were *Many*, This Number natu-  
 rally, in a very few Years, produced a very  
 remarkable Variation from what was once  
 settled; Every one who writes unavoidably  
 using his own Style, and Manner of Expression,  
 which often alone begins the Change; and  
 perhaps, in some Cases, his own *Scheme* of  
*Philosophy* which, introduced into *Religion*,  
 very much affects the Scheme of *Doctrine*  
 to be explained; and his own Judgment in  
 interpreting and commenting upon the *Words*  
*already* fixed; which carries forward the same  
 Change. — And if This be applied to the First  
 Christian Writers, after the *Apostles* were de-  
 parted; it will prove that, as their *Language*,  
 and *Philosophy*, were various; and, as they were  
 naturally led by these to differ from one ano-  
 ther, in what they professed to explain and set-  
 tle; great *Variations* from the *Original* Doc-  
 trine, might easily, by degrees, creep into the  
*Doctrines delivered* by Them; and therefore,  
 that nothing remains to Us, firm and stable  
 in Points of *Faith*, but what is recorded in  
 the *First Original* Books themselves, as the  
 Faith

*Faith* once delivered by *Christ*, and his *Apostles*. S E R M. II.

The *Protestant* Rule, therefore, remains true and righteous, notwithstanding the Attempts of many to weaken and confound it. To find out what that *Faith* was, which was *once delivered to the Saints*, as necessary for all *Christians*, there is no other Method for a *Christian*, at this Distance, to take, but to search those Books in which it was at first *delivered*. And the Rule for his Direction in that Enquiry is, That every thing necessary to be believed by Him, considered as a *Christian*, is in those Books not left to be gathered by *Consequences*, or *Implications*; but declared expressly to be necessary to his obtaining the Favour of God promised to *Christians*. These are the Points he is to attend to, whilst he is searching after what is the *Faith* absolutely necessary to *Him*, as a *Christian*. For no one can possibly think, that every thing *absolutely necessary* is not, in the *Gospel Revelation*, expressly proclaimed to be so: The Supposition of which will make it a very useless, or, at least, a very imperfect *Rule*; or, rather, *no Rule* at all.


The Goodness and Wisdom of God will be manifest from this *Rule*; because the *Points*, expressly declared, in express Words, to be *necessary*, will be found to be few, and not

SERM. surrounded with that *Confusion* and *Darkness*  
 II. which Human Explications and Additions  
 ~~~~~ have brought in by way of *Light*. For, as  
 the *Wisdom of Men is Foolishness with God*; so
 is the *Light of Men*, who would be wise, in
 Matters of *Revelation* alone, above what is
 written, *Darkness with God*. To proceed,

As the *Sense*, or Meaning of the Declara-
 tions of this kind, in the *New Testament*, is to
 be the Matter of *Christian Faith*; the only
Rule is, That in order to find out the *Faith*
once delivered, we must all endeavour, to the
 utmost of our Power, to find out the true
Sense of those Passages, in which any thing
 is declared necessary to be believed, in order to
 our Salvation; and to this Purpose, must
 make use of our own Understandings, and
 form the best Judgment we ourselves can.
 I know of no other *Rule*, but this, given by
 Almighty God, for the Direction both of the
Learned, and of the *Unlearned*. And if He
 has left no other Guide, no other ought to be
 imposed upon the World, by way of *Emenda-*
tion to the *Rule of Heaven*. As to the *Learned*;
 it is generally allowed, that This may be a
 good Rule for Them. But with relation to
 the *Unlearned*, great Outcries are made upon
 their *Frailty*, their *Ignorance*, their frequent
Errors; and the like. Whereas, if *Frailties*
 I and

and *Errors* be real *Objections*; they lye as much against its being a *Rule* for the *Learned* themselves; who have, in all Ages of the Church, been the chief Fountains, both of real and reputed *Schisms* and *Heresies*. It must, therefore, still be the *Rule*, not only for the *Learned*, but even for the *Unlearned*. And, if it be found true, that the *Points*, declared necessary to Salvation, are, at least, as well and plainly expressed in the *Words* of the *New Testament*, as any Man, or Collection of Men, can now express them; and that, in these *Points*, expressly declared to be *Necessary*, all *Translations* agree; and that, in the *Scripture Words*, expressing them, all *Learned Men*, of all Parties, agree; These must amount to a moral Certainty to act upon, in such a *Case*: especially when it is added, That it has not pleased God to settle any other *Rule* for their Guidance. When *St. Peter* complained that the *Unlearned*, and *Unstable*, in those early Days, wrested the other *Scriptures*, as well as some Words of *St. Paul*, to their own *Destruction*; this could not be meant of the *Unlearned*, in our modern Sense of that Word; but probably pointed out Those *Bad Christians*, who, *not having learnt* the true Nature of their Religion, neglected the plain necessary *Points* delivered, and distorted some *obscure*

S E R M. Passages to wicked Purposes, in their Practice.

11.  But whatever He meant; He himself proposed no Method of *Cure* for this *Evil*, but the *Warning* He gives of it, and the *Care* which He teaches all to take, against being seduced by such Errors of the *Wicked*; and the *Advice* he adds to *increase* in the *Knowledge* of *Jesus Christ*, 2 Pet. iii. 16, 17, 18.

We may, therefore, go on to observe, that, as it is absurd to suppose that any Man can be *saved* by the *Faith* of *Another*; or by any *Belief*, but what is truly *his own*; so, there is no possible Method of having a *Faith* of his own, properly so called, without building it entirely upon what appears right to his own Judgment, such as it is, after his best *Endeavours* for Information; and his sincerest Care to find out what God requires in the Gospel. If he rests his Hopes of Heaven upon his professing to *believe*, as *another* Man, or Body of Men, profess to believe; in the *first* place, He does not know whether They themselves *believe*, or only pretend to believe, what they lay upon Others to *profess*; and in the *next* place, it is certain, He really, in this Method, believes nothing by any *Faith* of his own; but only thinks He believes, because he is pleased to take certain Points upon Trust; and to be sure that something is right, of which He
himself

himself knows nothing, because Another, S E R M.
 whom he deposes to think for him, tells II.
 him that it is so; or rather, that it ought to
 be so professed. How great a *Delusion* is this,
 for any Man to imagine that he can be made
 acceptable to God by a *Faith* which is *not his*
own, but the *supposed Faith* of Others?

Let the Shame of such an *Absurdity* be left
 to *That Church* alone, which is forced to add
Absurdity to *Absurdity*, in order to make the
 Heap *consistent*; and which alone may, with
 any Decency, teach that *Christians* are saved on-
 ly by Believing (that is, thinking they believe)
 as the *Church* believes. For, after having
 taught, that Men may be saved by the *Good*
Works of *Others*, tho' they have none of
 their own; It may consistently add to this,
 another comfortable Point, that Men may be
 saved by the *Faith* of *Others*, though they have
 none of their own: Especially having, in its
System of *Faith*, so many *Articles* of *Supereroga-*
tion; as well as, in its *Saints*, so many *Works*
 of *Supererogation*. But let not *Protestants* fol-
 low them, tho' at never so great a Distance,
 in this *Destruction* of *Christianity*. No one
 can have a *Faith* of his own, who makes not
 use of his own *Judgment*, in fixing in his Mind
 what God calls upon him to believe, as neces-
 sary to a *Christian*. And *This* is the Reason

SERM. why he is to make use of *his own* Judgment ;
 II. not because it is better than the Judgment of
 Others ; nor because he himself imagines, or
 thinks, it to be better : but because it is *his
 own*. It is the *best* God has been pleased to
 give him ; and, being his own, it is therefore,
 his Guide in this Matter, without which he
 can have *no Faith* of *his own* ; and consequent-
 ly, without the Exercise of which, He cannot
 please God. So far is this from being the
Arrogance, or *Pride*, of setting up His own
 Judgment against his *Superiors*, in a bad
 Sense ; or vaunting it as better than *Theirs* ;
 that it is his Duty, his absolute Duty, to
 make use of it, in the Case of the *Faith* once
delivered to the Saints. Let what will be the
 Consequence of this, it is the only Rule
 God has left him to walk by. Without
 this, he will be so far from contending for
 the *Faith once delivered to the Saints*, that he
 cannot know so much as what it is ; nor have
 any *Faith* at all, to contend for.

Add to this, what must always be remarked,
 that Almighty GOD can guard against all the
 supposed bad Consequences of *his own* Rule,
 better than all the Wisdom of this World put
 together : Which, we see in the present Case,
 never fails, in attempting to cure the *Evils* of
 such a reasonable *Rule*, to *kill* and destroy that
real

real Faith, which this Method alone can procure. And not only this; but He, who is also the great Judge of the World, can and will make all those Allowances for the Errors of his imperfect Creatures, in their sincere following of *his own Rule*; which He will not be at all obliged to make, for the miserable and wicked Consequences of setting up a *Rule of their own*, in Contradiction to *His*. But I come now,

S E R M.
II.
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III. To conclude with a few *Observations*, naturally arising from what has been said. And

1. I shall only just observe, as I pass, if this *Text* should be found, at last, to refer to the *Contests of Christians*, suffering Themselves for what They themselves believe; how greatly, and how fatally, are They mistaken, who apply it to the making *Others* suffer, in any Instance, small or great, for what those *Others* do *not* believe? Thus transferring, according to the vicious Self-love of Human Nature, the irksome Duty of undergoing the fiery *Trial*, or *Contest*, themselves, for what They themselves believe; to *Others*, whom They often bring to Distress and Suffering, for the sake of *not believing* exactly the same? But supposing the Words to relate to

S E R M. the *Contests* of professed *Christians*, in Matters  
 II. of *Faith* one against another,

2. It is evident, that the *Laws* of the *Christian Contest* must be the *Laws* of the *Christian Religion*; and that whoever transgresses one of these *Laws*, in this *Combat*, forfeits all Right to the *Reward* of a *Conqueror*. And this at once cuts off all *Pretence* from *Christians*, under *Colour* of securing or settling the *Faith*, of contending for it, or any supposed Part of it, by the *Wrath* of *Man*; or, even the *Anger* and *Passion* of *Words*; much more, by the *Terror* of *Corporal Punishments*: In a word, by any *Method*, but what is prescribed in the *Gospel* itself.

3. Since we have, by *God's Providence*, those *Antient Books*, in which our *Lord* himself, his *Apostles*, and their *Companions*, have compleatly laid down what is of necessity to be believed; how injurious is it to represent Those as *Innovators*, whose whole *Design* is to bring *Christians* to search out their *Faith* in those *Books*? The *Faith*, which is there recorded, must be the most *antient* *Faith*: And, therefore, cannot possibly lye under the *Imputation* of *Novelty*. The *Additions* to it of *After-ages*, let them be as near as possible to those *First Writings*, yet still are truly *Innovations* and *Novelties*, with respect to  
 what

what was settled *before* them. Neither can S E R M. any Length of Time, or any Number of Ages, II. give them the true *Antiquity* of *Christ's Religion*, or ever make them any other than *No-velties*, and *Innovations*. And whoever refer *Christians* to any Writings, or Transactions, of Ages later than the *Apostolical*; unless it be as they may refer them to any Writings of the present Age, by way of Helps and Assistances, to find out the Meaning of what was *before delivered*; These are properly the Introducers and Encouragers of *Innovations* in the *Christian Religion*. But,

4. I cannot but observe, that, in order to preserve this *Faith*, *delivered* in those Antient Books, entire; the most secure, as well as the most Christian way, is to preserve the *Old Words*, and the *Old Language*, of those Books, as unvaried and unchanged, as possible. The Reason is plain, because They are the *Words* in which it pleased God it should at first be *delivered*. And therefore, tho' many Persons may mistake in their different Apprehensions concerning the Sense of these Words; yet, we may be sure, whilst we retain these Words, that we retain what God himself has seen fit should be *delivered* and transmitted to us, as the best Conveyance, all things considered, of the *Faith* required of Us. This I mean particularly with regard

S E R M. regard to those *Articles of Belief*, which are  
 II. properly *Christian*; because *These* could not be  
 so much as known to *Christians* at all, but by  
 the Declarations of the very *Author* and *Finisher*  
 of their *Faith*. It may be otherwise in the Point  
 of *Worship*; and in the *Moral Rules of Prac-*  
*tise*; in which Reason, or Natural Religion,  
 may be necessarily applied, to settle the true  
 Meaning and Extent of what is said. But as  
 to *Points of Faith*, peculiar to *Christians*, I do  
 not see how any Rule can be better than what  
 I am now laying down: Nor any thing more  
 reasonable, than that All should be accounted  
*Christians*, who profess the *Points*, properly  
 called the *Points of Christian Faith*, in the  
*Words* in which They were delivered, and now  
 are expressed, in the *New Testament* itself.

I am sensible, it is said, that Heresies arose,  
*i. e.* that *some* Men differed from *Others*, in  
 their Notions founded upon these *Words*: And  
 therefore, it was thought necessary to change  
 the *Language*, in which this *Faith* was delivered  
 to us. But did not Almighty God foresee this  
 great Evil, of Difference of Opinion, in the  
 Points in which Men have since differed?  
 He did: And yet He left our *Faith* delivered  
 in those *Words*, which are said to have been  
 the Foundation of those Differences. Or, are  
 We wiser than God, in chusing more effectual  
 Words

Words to this Purpose, than those in which S E R M.  
 the Persons commissioned by Him delivered II.  
 His Will? Who will say this? Or did He ap-  
 point that, in After-ages, the *Antient Language*  
 should be totally changed, for a *New System* of  
 Words; and that the *Faith* of *Christians* should  
 be delivered over again in *Novel Expressions*?  
 If he did, let a plain Text be produced; and  
 not such a consequential Argument, of the  
 Usefulness or Fitness of it, as may be urged,  
 even for the *Popish Infallibility* itself.

But when *New Language* has, by the Help  
 of such an Argument, been introduced; what  
 has been the Effect? Good and Honest Men  
 alone have been the Sufferers. *These* have been  
 cramped and disturbed, and, perhaps, deprived  
 of all worldly Privileges, by it. The Dishonest,  
 and Unthinking, and Slavish, Minds have always  
 rejoiced in such an earthly *Peculium*, as this Me-  
 thod secures to them. And, if we consult Ex-  
 perience, the *New Words* invented for the Secu-  
 rity of the *Faith*, with regard both to *Learned*  
 and *Unlearned*, have been generally, such as have  
 increased, and not diminished, *Heresies* and  
*Schisms*: Hard Terms, metaphysical and abstruse  
 Expressions, ambiguous themselves, tho' intro-  
 duced under Pretense of avoiding Ambiguity;  
 utterly *unintelligible* by the *Unlearned*, who yet  
 are to be saved by *Faith* as well as others; and  
 eternally

S E R M. eternally debated amongst the *Learned*. And

II. thus it will always be, when Men become wiser, *in their own Conceit*, to prevent Evils, than God himself. They first go out of the Road which He has chalked out: and then they find, at the End, that they cause a great deal of Evil, without preventing any: And only invent Instruments to *distress*, but not to *convince*, any Man of his real, or supposed, *Errors*.

*Lastly*, By contending for the *Faith*, as it was once delivered to the *Saints* in the *New Testament*, we shall only press upon Men the receiving what it is has pleased God to deliver; but shall avoid that *Great Evil* of enforcing upon *Them* the *Consequences*, which *We* ourselves see, or think we see, to follow from the *Doctrines* first delivered. It derogates from the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of God to think that He has not provided, that all Points truly *fundamental*, should be delivered in *express* Terms, and, in so many Words, declared to be *fundamental*. And this must ever be a great *Prejudice* against any Point enforced by *Men*, as *fundamental*; to find them obliged to deduce it by a *Consequential* Arguing from their own *Sense* of the Words of *Scripture*.

The just *Consequences* from any *Truth*, are, certainly, equally true with that *Truth*, from which they follow. And it is as certain, that



to *Him* who sees them to follow, or thinks he sees them, they are as *Truths*; and may justly be maintained as such. But they are not so to Others, who see them not in the same Light. Nor can they be made necessary to be believed by Others, 'till these Others themselves discover their *Relation* to the *Primitive Truths* of Religion: And then they will, of Course, and Necessity, believe them. But to make the Consequences, supposed or real, of *fundamental Doctrines*, to be *fundamental* to *All Christians*, and necessary to be *explicitly* believed, is first to create a *new Rule of Faith*; and then it is to suppose, as a Truth, what is the greatest Falshood in Fact, that all Men's Capacities and Understandings are equally fitted to see the same *Deductions*, and the same *Consequences*, which Some may see.

And this is a great Objection against all *Innovations* of *Language* in fundamental Points; That almost all those *New Words* and Phrases, upon which the greatest Stress has been laid, are seen to be framed from *Consequential Arguings*: not to be merely *other* Words for the *Old Words*, but to be framed upon a particular *Interpretation* of those *Old Words*, and by a Train of Consequences drawn from the antient Expressions, explained in a particular Manner.

SERM. In fine, the *Faith* to be *contended* for, was  
 II. compleatly delivered, *before* it was to be con-  
 tended for. The *Direction* of *Other Men's*  
*Faith* is not, *our* Capacity of seeing Conse-  
 quences, or *our* Skill in Interpreting ; but the  
 plain Declarations of *Christ*, and his *Apostles*.  
 To *contend* for it, in the very Form in which it  
 was at first *once delivered*, is a Glory to a  
*Christian*. It is to follow God, by contending  
 for it in a Method surrounded with those In-  
 conveniencies only, with which it has pleased  
 Him to leave it surrounded, for the Trial of  
 the Sincerity of his Servants. To contend for  
 the *Faith*, as it has been *over* and *over again*  
 delivered by *Men*, has, at least, this Evil in it,  
 that it is a forsaking the Method *chosen* by Al-  
 mighty God, as insufficient ; and chusing *Ano-*  
*ther*, which, by being effectually pursued, has  
 been already seen to be the Inlet of All *Super-*  
*stition*, all *Absurdity*, and all *Persecution*,  
 into the *Church* of *Christ* : from the *Reproach*,  
 and *Guilt*, and *Burthen*, of which, may it please  
 God at length to deliver it, through his Son  
*Jesus Christ*, our Lord !

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*Of Judging One Another.*

S E R M O N III.


Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 18,  
1721-2.

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ROMANS xiv. 4.


*Who art Thou that judgest another Man's Ser-  
vant? To his own Master he standeth, or fal-  
leth.*

WE find, in this Chapter, the *Apostle*, with his usual Zeal, opposing that Spirit of Censuring and Judging One Another, which very early shewed itself in the *Christian Church*; and, at the same time, displaying before the Eyes of all *Christians*, in his own Example, the greatest Instance of Temper and good Conduct in this respect. He knew the Genius of the *Christian Religion* perfectly well. He was acquainted where the *Truth* lay, in those Differences which raised this Spirit of Censure in his Time. He is free to declare his own Judgment, on *one* side of the Question. But tho' He had all the Light  
and

S E R M.  
III.  


SERM. and Authority of an *Apostle*, to enforce an *Agreement* with Himself; yet, He chose rather  
 III. to plead, even with Warmth, for Condescension, and Love, and Regard, to Those who were not of his Mind; and whom He knew to be in an Error.

The things which gave ground for this ill Behaviour of *Christians* to one another, were of the smallest Moment; *Some* thinking to please their common Master, amongst other greater Matters, with observing several *Jewish* and trivial Rules with respect to Eating, and Holydays, and the like; *Others*, thinking this a Weakness, and that *Christians* were freed from such like Burthens: But *neither* contented with enjoying their own Judgments; but *One* Sort censuring and judging the *Other*, for the Observation, or Neglect, of such Matters, just according as They themselves thought fit either to observe, or neglect, them. Here it was fit, therefore, for the *Apostle* to interpose; and shew the Nature and Temper of *Christianity*, with respect to the Case before Him. But, alas! This evil Spirit of *Censure*, and *Judging*, was not then lay'd, even by the *Authority* of an *Apostle*: nor by the *Argument* taken from that *Day of the Lord*, which He placed in their view, and from that *Judgment-seat* of *Christ*, their com-

mon Master, to which He directed their S E R M.  
Minds; that they might not dare to raise III.  
*Judgment-seats* of their own, in order to try   
and condemn One Another.

Too much of this Spirit was still seen in the earliest Ages of the *Church*, and too much remains to this Day: to which there is no other Remedy to be applied, but the same Remedy prescribed in the *Gospel*; the same Rules laid down by *St. Paul*; and the same Argument, which he thought fit to make use of. For, *Christianity* was revealed from Heaven, not only to lead Men into all necessary *Truth*; but into the Paths of *Humanity* towards Those who are really in *Error*, or supposed to be so: to conquer the Tempers and Passions of Men; to teach them not to make their own Notions the Measure of other Men's Conduct; to habituate them to such a forbearing, complying, yielding, and tender Disposition, as may be a moving Argument to their great and supreme Judge, at last, to forgive and acknowledge Them.

There being, therefore, so much of the contrary Spirit to this, still reigning amongst *Christians*, tho' not one Grain of it in *Christianity* itself, it must be very proper to consider the Argument, here made use of by *St. Paul*; and see, if it will not help to cure that Dif-

S E R M. temper of Mind, by which many *Christians*  
 III. still rave against Others, with all the Marks  
 and Expressions of Enmity and Reproach;  
 and often shut the Gates of the *Church*,  
 and of *Heaven* itself, against them; declare  
 them unacceptable to God; and condemn  
 them, with as much Authority and Solemnity,  
 as if They were appointed by God to be their  
 final Judges. *Who art Thou*, says the Apostle,  
*that judgest the Servant of Another? To his*  
*own Master he standeth, or falleth.* From  
 which Words, the following Particulars may  
 properly be recommended to *Christians*, as  
 Arguments against this Spirit of *Censure* and  
*Judging*.

I. That we are not qualified thus to sit in  
*Judgment* upon One Another.

II. That it is not the Province of *Us*, who  
 are but *fellow Servants* to the same *Master*.

III. That it is a Province peculiarly reserved  
 to *Himself*, by that common *Master* whom We  
 all serve. To which let us add, what is implied  
 to the same Purpose, ver. 10. of this *Chapter*,

IV. That it is our Business to prepare for the  
 final Judgment of Ourselves, and not to be  
 found judging Others. *For we shall all stand*  
*before the Judgment-seat of Christ:* And, ver. 12.

## Of Judging One Another.

51

Every One of Us shall give an Account of Himself to GOD. S E R M. III.

I. We are not at all qualified thus to sit in Judgment upon One Another. For, *Who art Thou that judgest Another*, but a weak, prejudiced, fallible Man thyself; and, consequently, not at all qualified for such an Office? This is, indeed, a strong Consideration, against our assuming to Ourselves the Office of Judging Others, That *We* are void of all those Qualifications, which are requisite to our *judging aright* about Them; and particularly, with regard to their Religious Conduct; in which we are most apt to exercise this Dominion over them. For, being Ourselves *weak* and *fallible*, and often passionate Men, We are so easily imposed upon and misled; so insensibly and even undesignedly prejudiced; so little acquainted with the first Springs of Action in Others; so wholly Strangers to the inward Thoughts and Designs of their Hearts; so unable to know all the several Circumstances that ought to be thrown into the Balance; (their Education; the unavoidable Bias put upon their Minds, before They were able to think for Themselves; their natural Tempers; their Inducements and Motives;) and so unwilling to make all those necessary and due

SERM. Allowances, which We always expect in our  
 III. own Case: That, on all these, and many more

Accounts, who would venture so far out of his Depth, as to declare, or insinuate, any thing concerning not only the evil Designs of *Others*, but their Unacceptableness to God; who have no other apparent and visible Mark of wilful *Evil* upon Them, but their differing, in some Opinions, or circumstantial Practises, from Ourselves?

And there is one great Proof of our being unqualified, either by the Defects of our Wills, or our Understandings, to set up Ourselves for *Judges* over *Others*; that it is our constant Way, in this unreasonable Procedure, to *judge* Others by our own Notions, and our own Opinions, *i. e.* by our own Powers and Capacities: Whereas God Almighty, the great Searcher of all Hearts, will not judge one Man by the Notions of Another, but by the Man's own Notions, and his own Capacity. And He is infallible in his *Decisions*, and unerring in his Knowledge, of what is Truth. *We* condemn *Others*, not because they are not consistent with Themselves; not because they speak, or act, in Religion, against *their own* Consciences; but because they agree not with Us, or contradict our Opinions. A Procedure, which all Men so constantly judge to be unjustifiable,



justifiable, when it comes to their own Turn to be so used, that They think Nothing more unreasonable; or more unjust. Did we truly value and regard that Simplicity, and Integrity of Mind, without which *Truth* itself is but an accidental Thing, and of no Value to the Possessor; or had We a true Christian Love of our Neighbour; We should take a Delight in every Mark of apparent *Honesty*, which We meet with, even where We meet with the greatest Difference of Opinion at the same Time: and our great Concern would be *then* expressed, when We find so much of what Others perhaps think, or call, *Truth*, taken up without Examination; repositied in ill-tempered Minds; void of all other Recommendation, but an accidental Agreement with Ourselves. But whilst our Passions are as strong, as our Understandings are weak; and whilst We are as unwilling to treat any thing well, but what is agreeable to our own Notions, as We are unable to see and know what is requisite to our making a due Judgment of *Others*; We ought to acknowledge Ourselves unfit for the Office; and to keep at as great a Distance from it, as possible. But,


II. As We are not at all qualified for the Work of judging Others; so it is wholly

S E R M. out of our Province, who are Ourselves but

III. fellow Servants with Those whom We thus treat as if We were their Lords and Masters.

Who art Thou that judgest the Servant of Another? One in the same Rank and Order with Thyself? His being of another Mind, or differing in Judgment, about some Things relating to his Master's Service, in which honest Men may differ; is no real Injury to Us; it imports no Calamity; threatens Us with no Ruine: and therefore, We have not the Pretense of *Self-Defense*, or *Self-Preservation*, to take upon Us the Province. If these have any thing to do in this Matter, it must be to induce Us to act a quite contrary Part. For Nothing will so reconcile Others to Us; Nothing will so meliorate and soften their Dispositions towards Ourselves; Nothing will so defend Us from those Censures and Judgments, which are so uneasy to Us, when they come to be our own Lot; as our not censuring and judging Them. For They have as much Right to do it to Us, as We have to Them. We differ as much from Them, as They do from Us. They are as tenacious of what they believe, as We are of our own Faith: and think it as sacred, and as important, as We can think our own: and, as far as We can know, are as fully persuaded, that it has all the Marks of *Truth* upon it.

We

We see, therefore, Our great Business is, with 3 E R M.  
 Honesty and Integrity, to serve our own III.  
 Master. If we should think it too much for   
 our Fellow Servants, to interrupt and molest  
*Us*, in what We are persuaded is for his Ser-  
 vice, or the Propagation of what He approves ;  
 and esteem *them* much out of their Province  
 in such a Behaviour ; let Us learn that We are  
 equally out of *our* Province, when We, in  
 the same Manner, disturb and vex our *Fellow*  
*Servants*, with our severe *Censures*, and Judg-  
 ments.

III. It is to be particularly considered, that  
 this is the Province reserved to *Himself*, by  
 that common Master whom We all serve. *Who*  
*art Thou that judgest another's Servant ? To his*  
*own Master he standeth, or falleth ; that Master*  
 whom he serveth, whose Disciple he is, who  
 is to be his *Judge* ; and whose peculiar Office  
 it is to determine concerning the Behaviour of  
 his Servants, from Multitudes of Circumstan-  
 ces, which He alone can and does know. To  
*Him* the last Appeal is justly made. He is  
 qualified for the Office, being perfectly know-  
 ing, wise, and good ; perfectly free from all  
 Bias and Prejudice ; fully acquainted with  
 every Particular necessary to the forming a  
 right Judgment ; and fully disposed to make all

S E R M. fitting and reasonable Allowances, for his  
 III. *Creatures and Servants*; and none, but such as  
 are so. And this Office peculiarly belongs to  
 Him, as he Himself has declared; He being the  
 Master, who will call every individual Servant  
 to give up his own Account; to be judged  
 according to his own Capacity, his own Ta-  
 lents; his own Opportunities; and not accord-  
 ing to those of other Men, or according to the  
 Humours and Passions of Others of his Fel-  
 low Servants. And this being declared to be  
 the Province of God himself, in order to de-  
 ter Us from meddling with it; how should it  
 affect Us to consider, that whatever rash,  
 hasty, ungrounded, prejudiced, uncandid,  
*Judgment*, We pass upon our Neighbour, for  
 what perhaps, he, in the Simplicity of his  
 Heart, believes to be Service to God, and to  
*Christ*: We invade the Province of God;  
 usurp his Dominion; erect Ourselves into  
 Gods over our Brethren; and, like the Man  
 of Sin, exalt Ourselves to a Dignity and Office  
 which is the sacred Prerogative of God  
 himself, who alone knoweth the Hearts  
 of Men.

IV. I observed that the *Apostle* (in the 10th  
 Verse of this Chapter) puts *Christians* in Mind,  
 in order to remove their Thoughts from judg-  
 ing


ing One Another, that *We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ*, and, in the 12th Verse, that *We shall every One give an Account of himself to God*: plainly recommending it to our Thoughts, that We have enough to do to prepare for *our own Judgment*, at that great and solemn Day; without troubling Ourselves with the censuring and judging Others. And, indeed, what greater Argument can there be? For, Who, that considers that there is a *Day* coming, when he shall himself appear before an All-knowing Judge, to be condemned or acquitted, as his own Actions have been agreeable or disagreeable to the Law of his Master; Who, that considers that he has such a Concern upon his Hands, such a Trial to expect, such a Judgment to meet, will easily find Time to employ upon the Behaviour of a *Fellow-servant*, whose Master he is not, and for whom he is not to answer?

Nay, Who that thinks of that solemn Day, does not hope for, and stand in need of, the Mercy of God to himself, or, in other Words, the Favour and Candour of his Judge? And who that considers the Matter in this Light, can suffer in himself a Severity towards Others; whilst he himself expects all reasonable Allowances at the Hands of his great Judge?

If

§ E R M. *If Thou, Lord, shouldst be extreme, to mark what is done amiss; O Lord, who may abide it? And,*  
 III. *since it is this Extremity of Rigour in our great Judge, that We have so much Reason to dread for Ourselves; how can We expect any other, if We be, not only extreme to mark what is really amiss, but to judge and censure in our Brethren, what, for ought We know, may be founded upon the strictest Honesty and Integrity; the most lovely Qualities in the Eyes of God? Who art Thou, therefore, O Man, who judgest the Servant of Another? To his own Master he standeth or falleth. Nay, We shall all stand before the Judgment-seat of Christ; and every One of Us shall give Account of himself, and not of Others, to God. These are Words which, as We have seen, contain the most powerful Argument against all unreasonable Censure, and Judging, of our Brethren; such Arguments as human Minds, rightly informed, and rightly disposed, cannot withstand.*


But what is it, then, it may be said, that *Christianity* allows in this Case? Doth it not permit Us to take any Notice of the *Errors* and *Mistakes*, in the important Matters of Religion, in which We imagine Others to be? Have We no Part to act with respect to *Them*? And are they wholly to be overlooked by Us? I answer, by no Means. . The *Gospel*  
 rather

rather obliges Us to take Notice of them, than S E R M.  
 the contrary. But this, in a Way very different III.  
 from that in which generally *Christians* have   
 done it. Two Particulars I shall mention in  
 answer to this Inquiry.

1st, We are not at all forbidden, but encouraged, to endeavour to remove all Prejudices, and Errors, out of the Minds of our *fellow Christians*; and to recommend to them, with all Demonstration both of good Argument and Christian Temper, the Way of *Truth*, which We are persuaded is right. Thus, in this very *Chapter*, *St. Paul* doth not scruple to declare his own Judgment, in Favour of that Notion, that there was no Sort of Meat but what it was lawful to partake of; and this, to be sure, with Design to lead insensibly those *Christians*, who were troubled with the contrary Scruple, into a true Notion of this Matter; that they might be rid of a false Notion in their Judgments, and a great Burthen in their Practice. And, without doubt, He would not have scrupled to have argued the Point more largely with any who were of another Mind, upon any just Occasion. Nor is there the least Reason to be given from *Christianity*, or the Practice of the *Apostle*, why it should not be allowable, and commendable, for any *Christians* to endeavour to persuade  
 Others

S E R M Others of their Errors, even tho' they be not  
 III. of the first Order, or of the most malignant  
 ~~~~~ Consequence. But then,

2dly, After this is done in the most in-
 offensive Way, all the rest must be left to
Christian Charity; which never shines brighter,
 never displays its Glory more, than when it
 shews its Power amongst those of different
 Minds, and different Persuasions. *St. Paul*,
 in this Chapter, layeth down his own Judg-
 ment. And, tho' he was an *Apostle*, and had
 as just a Claim as possible, to be followed in
 that *Judgment*; yet He doth not immediately
 expect, that all those *Christians*, prejudiced
 and biaſſed the other Way, should at once
 leave off their Practises, or correct their wrong
Judgments, in a Matter which concerned not
 the Vitals of Religion; but thinks it most for
 the Honour of God, that *Charity* should shew
 its Part in these Differences: and rather chu-
 ſes, that Humility and brotherly Kindness
 should conquer Passion and personal Prejudice,
 than that they all should presently be obliged
 to have, or profess, the same Notions; or to
 conform themselves to the Judgment of One
 Another. To love, and bear with, Those who
 agree with Us in all Things, is but a low Pitch
 of Good-Nature and Virtue: I had almost
 said, it is but sacrificing to our own Pride;
 and

and little better than loving *Ourselves* over SERM.
 again in *Others*. But to bear with, and to be III.
 kind in our Opinions of, Those who differ 
 from Us, is to sacrifice our Pride and Self-
 Complacence at the Altar of *Charity*: It is tru-
 ly to love *Others*, who are so much the farther
 from being *Ourselves*, as They are removed
 from Us in Judgment and Opinion about
 some Points. This is a Pitch of Virtue wor-
 thy of a *Christian*, That he judges not the in-
 visible Ground of the Behaviour of *Others*;
 that, as GOD, for *Christ's* Sake, has forgiven
him, and is ready to make all reasonable Al-
 lowances for *him*, so is *he* ready to be candid
 in interpreting the Actions of *Others*; and to
 bear with all that Variety of Judgment which
 can possibly be accounted for, from that Variety
 of Tempers, Education, and Conversation,
 which is unavoidable in this State.

If any one now enquires after the ill Ef-
 fects of the *contrary Temper*; it is enough to
 say, that it is the Beginning of all *Persecution*:
 which is as directly opposite to the *Spirit* of
 the *Gospel*, as any *Error* can be to *Truth*; and
 is, indeed, a much worse Evil than all the
 Errors put together, which, in all Ages of
 the *Church*, have been ever pretended, or de-
 signed, to be cured by it. We may see, in the
 earliest Days of the *Church*, what *Evils* sprang
 from

S E R M.

III.

from such small Beginnings, as some may account this mutual *Censure* and *Judging* to be; and how one Degree of Iniquity brought on another. In the *Apostles* Days, and even under their Eyes, the Scene began with mutual *Censure* and *Condemnation* in *Words* only. The Interposition of *St. Paul* with the *Christians* at *Rome*; We may hope, kept this Evil a while from breaking out into greater Violence. But some Years after the *Apostle's* Death, it shewed itself again, and particularly at *Rome*, the very Place to which He had writ his Advice; and in a Manner, enough to give all *Christians* Warning at what a Distance they should ever keep themselves from this Temper. I mean that very remarkable Instance of Violence, shewn by the Bishop of this very *City* of *Rome*, against *Another* Bishop, on no more important Occasion than That of his celebrating a *Festival*, on a *Day* different from That on which it was observed at *Rome*: and this *Violence* carried as far as Rencouncing *All Communion* with his *Brother-Bishop*; and with a great Number of Other Churches which joined with Him.

This was before the *Powers* of this World were become *Christian*. As soon as That was the Case, This fiery Spirit brought the *Secular* Arm into its Aid: and by degrees, the Punishments

nishments properly belonging to *Temporal Affairs*, were made the Instruments of the Rage of *Christians* against one another. For human Passion seldom knows where to stop, when once the Mind is taken off from that mild, and gentle, and forbearing, Temper, which is so great a Part of the *Law of God*.

Happy had it been for the After-ages, if all *Christians* had learnt, from such Examples, not to depart from this most reasonable Branch of his Law. But, however it has been hitherto; so many hundred Years Experience may, by this time, one would hope, teach the *Christian* World, and the *Protestant* World especially, to recollect itself. In vain has the Gospel reached our Ears: In vain doth *That* attempt to root out Barbarity, Inhumanity, Violence, Persecution, unless the Beginning be laid in our Tempers; unless we learn to be inwardly well-disposed, and candid to one another. For indeed the *Contrary*, even in *Thought*, is no better than a *mental Persecution* of our Neighbour, which, first express'd in hard and angry Words only, seldom fails to end in open and avowed Acts of *external* Persecution; whenever *Opportunity* adds *Power* to the *Wills* of Those who indulge Themselves in so unchristian a Disposition.

Upon

SERM.

Upon the whole; If the tender Compassion

III. of God to Us be any thing more than *Sound*;

if We be sensible what *We* are Ourselves, and what our *Neighbours* are to Us; if We have any Regard to that great common *Master* whom we all serve; if we ever think of that great *Tribunal* at which We must all appear: Let Us be induced by all these, to cast out of our Thoughts, and Words, all that Censure and Judging of Others, which will only help to condemn Ourselves: and let Us cultivate in our Breasts that happy and god-like Temper of *Forbearance* and *Candour*, which will contribute so much to our inward Peace now, and to our final *Forgiveness*, and *Happiness*, hereafter.


Of the true Use of this World.

S E R M O N I V.

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 21,*
1724-5.


I CORINTHIANS vii. 31.

*And They that use this World, as not abusing it:
For the Fashion of this World passeth away.*

AFTER St. Paul had, in the former S E R M.
Part of this Chapter, given the *Corin-* I V.
thians such prudential Rules, relating 
to their Behaviour in the World, as the Cir-
cumstances of *Christians* at that Time required,
He comes to sum up what He chiefly intended
by all that He had been saying. This He doth
in the 29th, 30th, and 31st Verses. Verse 29.
*But this I say, Brethren, the Time is short. It
remaineth that both they that have Wives, be as
though they had none: So our Translation ex-
presseth it. But it seems more agreeable to
the Original, to connect the Parts of that Sen-
tence, after this Manner. But, Brethren,*
F this

S E R M. this is what I am saying, and inculcating upon
 IV. you, (because, as to what remaineth, the Time, or Opportunity, that will be afforded Us in this World, is very short) This is, I say, what I am pressing upon you, that they *that have Wives*: They that have Families to concern themselves for, should thus far be as though they had none, that They should not suffer themselves to be overwhelmed with worldly Cares, so as to forget the State they are in, as They are *Christians*: Ver. 30. that They *that weep*, or are under any Affliction, should be *as tho' they wept not*; should behave themselves under it, as Persons who in a short Time shall be released from it: that They that *rejoice*, should be *as tho' they rejoiced not*; They that enjoy the most prosperous Condition of Life, should behave themselves with Moderation, as Persons under a Sense of the Shortness of that Time which I am speaking of: and *They that buy*, should be *as tho' They possessed not*; should behave themselves only as Tenants for a very short Space, not as lasting Possessors of what They purchase.

At the 31st Verse, He sums up, in a very comprehensive Expression, the Whole of what He means to press upon *Christians* at that Time, with regard to all the *Goods* of this *World*: viz. that *all who use this World*, should behave

behave themselves, as *not abusing it*; either, S E R M.
 as not using it with too great an Intensity of IV.
 Affection towards it; or, much more, as not 
 using it, or any Portion of it, in any Manner,
 or for any Purpose, contrary to the Original
 Design of the Creator of all Things. Then
 the *Apostle* adds this Reason for what He saith,
for the Fashion, or Figure, of this World passeth
away: That is, either the *World itself*; or the
 present *State and Condition* of Things in the
 World. This is all, according to the *Apostle*,
 to *pass away*; or to be so entirely altered, as
 that the same Things, and Circumstances of
 Things, can have no Place after that Altera-
 tion.

In this *Passage*, indeed, the *Apostle* may be
 supposed to have had a principal View to that
 Scene of Persecutions which was then coming
 upon true *Christians*; and which should alter,
 to them, the State of the World entirely: and
 likewise, to that total *Dissolution* of the present
 Fabrick and Face of Things, which in those
first Days was certainly understood, and often
 spoken of, as a Matter just then coming, and
 very near at hand.

But, without any critical Examination of
 the precise Meaning of the Words, as They
 stand in this particular Place: and considering
 them in that more general Sense which the

S E R M. first Sound of them may be supposed to raise
 IV. in Us, as allowing an *Use* of the *World*, law-
 ful and necessary; as condemning the *Abuse*
 of it; and as urging a Reason against abusing
 it, from the uncertain Condition of this *World*; it
 will be proper for Us to consider,

I. What is meant by the *World*; and what is comprehended under this Word.

II. When it is that We *use* it, as it is our Praise and Duty to do. And,

III. What it is to *abuse* it. And then to make a short Reflexion upon the Argument here made use of, by the *Apostle*. And all, with Reference to Ourselves, and the State of the *World* at present.

I. The *first* thing is to consider what is meant by the *World*; and what is comprehended under this Word. And here it is most evident that by the *World*, we are to understand, whatever this *World* contains in it; whatever it can boast of as on any Account desirable; and particularly, whatever there is in it, that Men are seen to think it most worth their while to pursue after, and to obtain. All this may be reduced to these *three*, *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Pleasure*; the *three* great Masters of the Affections, and Actions, of Those who think most of this *World*.

Riches may well be mentioned in the first S E R M .
 Place, because they lead the way to worldly IV.
Honour, and worldly *Pleasure*. They have
 it in their Power most commonly to procure
 whatever a Man may propose, or fancy to
 himself, as necessary to his Happiness in this
 World: and, too often, to procure what
 ought to be the Reward of *Merit*, and *Virtue*
 alone. But then, as they seem frequently to
 be desired, and sought after, even for *their own*
Sakes; I mean by the *Covetous*, who despise
 what is called *Honour*, and know no other
Pleasure, but that of having much of them in
 their Possession: They may well claim a dis-
 tinct Place by themselves, as they are seen to
 stand for *themselves*, and *all other* good Things
 too; to be not only *Riches*; but *Honour*, and
Pleasure, in the Opinion of Those who set
 their Hearts upon them. But, as there are
Others who are as fond of worldly *Honour* and
Grandeur, as the most *Covetous* Man can be of
 his *Mony*; and *Others*, as transported with the
 Love of *Pleasure*, as either of these can be
 with *their Idols*; and, as *Both* these latter can
 make *Riches* subservient to the *Objects* of *their*
particular Desires: They may justly claim,
 every One of them, to be distinctly spoken of,
 on this Occasion.

S E R M. Nor is the Nature of this World, or of
 IV. Man, so framed, as that We must suppose that
 ~~~~~ *Riches, Honour, or Pleasure, are not good Things*; or, that all Desire of them, or Enjoyment of them, is sinful. Far from it. *This World* is our *Habitation* at present. It is our *House of Entertainment*, in our *Passage* to another. The three great *Entertainments* that it sets before Us, are *Riches, Honour, and Pleasure*. They cannot but be accounted *Goods* (till they are wilfully made *Evils*) by all who carry human Nature about them, and live in such a State as this is.

This being then the Nature of the *World*; and these being the *principal Goods* it pretends to; and of so great Consequence, as to be ever chiefly comprehended in the Name *World*; it is plain, that the *Use* of these, is the *Use* of the *World*; and the *Abuse* of these, the *Abuse* of the *World*: that, when We use *Riches, Honour, and Pleasure*, as we ought, then We *use the World without abusing it*; and that *then* We *abuse* the *World*, when We abuse the *Riches, Honours, or Pleasures*, of it. Let Us then,

II. In the *Second Place*, enquire, as I proposed, when it is that We *use* the *World*, that is the *Riches, Honours, or Pleasures* of it, as We ought; as it is our Praise, and Duty to do. The *first Step* of all is to use them *innocently*, so as not to be induced, by the Love of them,

them, to the Violation of *any* One Law of S E R M. God; or of *Reason*, which is *His* Gift. IV. The *second* is to *use* them so as to make them the Instruments of much good, and of lasting Happiness, to Ourselves and Others. The *former* is something: but it is the lowest Degree of Virtue and Praise. It leads naturally to the *latter*: and without it, it can hardly be supposed; and, I believe, never is found. For He that doth not *use* the good Things of this World, so as to make them the Instruments of *Good* to himself, and of *Happiness* to Others, is, I fear, always seen to make them the Means of *Evil* to Himself, and of *Unhappiness* to Others: as, He that is seen to receive no Harm from them himself, and to be untouched by the Evil that comes from them too naturally, will likewise be seen to make them the Occasions, and Instruments, of Good, and Happiness to Others. Their Nature is such, that, if they produce not Good to Ourselves and Others, they can hardly avoid producing a great deal of Evil and Mischief.


The true use of *Riches* is first to be considered. And in what is it that They differ from the other common Dirt of this Earth, if they be not used so as to administer the Conveniences and Necessaries of this Life to Ourselves; and after that, to all about Us, to whom Our

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Help can reach? When a Man is seen, out of a Sort of Madneſs of *Covetouſneſs*, to deny Himſelf the common Conveniences of Life, rather than break in upon his ſacred Store; He cannot be ſaid to *uſe* Riches, becauſe they lie untouched and unuſed, unleſs they are ſometimes handled and told over, with an unaccountable Satisfaction. But this is ſo very rare a Sort of *Covetouſneſs*, that it raiſeth the Aſtoniſhment of all, whenever it appears. There are *Few*, who will not make uſe of the *Riches* of this World, for their own Eaſe, and Convenience; but *Many*, who ſtop here, when they ſhould go much farther.

The next Thing is to conſider the Abundance that We enjoy; and how much of it can ſafely and ſecurely be ſpared, without breaking in upon our own Conveniences and Accommodations, or our own nearer Relations: and of this Abundance to impart to Thoſe who have it not in their Power to procure for themſelves the common Neceſſaries of Life without our Aſſiſtance. This is a noble Uſe of *Riches* in Truth; but not more noble, than it is reaſonable, and fitting. For what can We better, or more becomingly, do with thoſe Superfluities which ſurround Us? what Method can We take, to make them more effectually ſubſervient to our own  
Happineſs,


Happiness, than to use them thus? What S E R M.  
 more manly Pleasure, than to look upon every IV.  
 Thing human to be of Concern to Ourselves?   
 and every Thing that can happen to any *other*  
 Men, to touch *Us* nearly, as *Men* also? What  
 more rational Satisfaction, than to think of  
 Multitudes made happy by *Us*? It is a Sort  
 of approaching to Divinity; and a being, in  
 the best Sense possible to *Us*, *Partakers* of the  
*Divine Nature*; to make Ourselves, under the  
 supreme GOD, Assistants, Supporters, Bene-  
 factors, Preservers, to all within our Reach.  
 They that feel it, know that there cannot be  
 a greater Pleasure to a well-disposed Mind,  
 than this of adding to the Happiness, or di-  
 minishing the Miseries, of our Fellow-Crea-  
 tures around *Us*. Nor can the Praise due to  
 such a beneficent *Use* of *Riches*, be detained  
 from it. Every One applauds it, tho' every  
 One will not imitate it. It constrains and com-  
 mands the Voice of Mankind in it's Favour.  
 And if it should at any Time, by some strange  
 Accident, go without *that*; yet, it always re-  
 commends to the great Judge of the World.  
 It makes *Us* rich towards *Him*; and makes  
*Him* condescend to be Our *Debtor*, on Ac-  
 count of Others, to whom our *Riches* are dis-  
 pensed.

It

S E R M. It is God, the Great Disposer of all Things, who makes *One Man* differ from *Another*. It is his *Providence* that gives or allows Success to attend upon his Designs; that fills his Coffers, and makes his Abundance to overflow. What can this be for? Not merely for *his own* Happiness, considered by himself, as separated from the rest of the World: for God sees, what We do not always see, that the Happiness of a Man, the present Happiness, is so far from being certainly promoted by the *Abundance of what He possesseth*, that it is too commonly utterly destroyed, and confounded, by it. The plain Intent of this Favour is, that this *Abundance* should be dispensed abroad, by the *Rich*; whom he makes his Stewards, when He makes them *Rich*, for the Support of the Poor and Distressed under them.

This is the *Use*, the only *Use*, that Almighty God can design shall be made of the Abundance and Superfluities of *rich Men*: and when they use their Riches after this Manner, then do they truly *use* the *World*, as far as the *Riches* of it are concerned, not only *as not abusing it*; but as God, and Reason, and the End of Human Society, require.

The next Thing is the true Use of the *Honours* of this World. Now, the whole End proposed in them, by the very Nature of the Thing,

Thing, being only to preserve and keep up S E R M  
 such Distinctions of Order amongst the Mem- IV.  
 bers of the same Body, as seems necessary for   
 the better carrying forward the Ends of Hu-  
 man Society; it is certain that, when they  
 are *used*, by the Possessors of them, with re-  
 gard only to that Distinction, they are then  
 used, as the Nature and End of them require.  
 When Humility and Affability accompany  
 them; when the *Power* that is generally join-  
 ed with them, shews itself in *Benevolence* and  
*Charity*; when the Mind of the Possessor  
 views them with that *Lowliness*, and *Mede-*  
*ration*, which are the constant Companions  
 of a great Spirit; and actuates the whole Be-  
 haviour so, that all that is decent and regu-  
 lar seems the Effect of that Greatness, and to  
 be dictated by that Distinction, which they  
 give a Man; engaging him to excel in *Vir-*  
*tue*, as well as the outward Appearances of  
*Honour*; then, We may truly say, that He  
*useth* this World, as far as the *Honours* of this  
 World are concerned, as He ought to do;  
 as the Nature of them, or, as Reason, and  
 God, require.

The *third* of those *Good Things* which this  
 World principally boasts of, is *Pleasure*: a  
 fatal *Evil*, in the End, to Many! but what  
 may be used so as to bring no Guilt along with  
 it.

S E R M. it. For *Pleasure*, in the Design of Almighty  
 IV. God, being that Satisfaction, which necessarily  
 arises from Our Senses, and the Objects about  
 Us; and from the indissoluble Relation of  
 these *two*, to one another; and our Senses  
 and these Objects in this mutual Relation be-  
 ing the Work of God himself: the *Pleasure*  
 which results thence, must be in itself good,  
 and fitting. The *Pleasures* of this World  
 consequently are *used*, as they ought to be,  
 when they are looked upon as the grateful  
 Circumstances of our well-being in this  
 World; when they are pursued with *Tempe-  
 rance* and *Moderation*, so as to preserve, and  
 not destroy Life and Health; so, as the Laws  
 and Dictates of sound Reason direct; so, as  
 not to break in either upon our own Duty  
 and Innocence; or upon the *Property* and  
*Peace* of *Others* about Us. Thus using them,  
 we take care, that what is not *Evil* in itself,  
 doth not become evil, and pernicious, but  
 beneficial, and good to Us, as long as we are  
 in this State.

I have thus endeavoured to give you the  
 best Account I can, when it is that we *use this  
 World*, as not abusing it; by shewing You,  
 when we may be said to *use* the principal good  
 Things it boasts of, *Riches*, *Honour*, and *Plea-  
 sure*, as we ought: viz. as the Nature of  
 Things,



Things, the Nature of Ourselves, the Nature of Human Society, and the eternal Laws of God, direct, and require. And from this Account will easily appear, what I propos'd,

S E R M.

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III. In the *third* Place, *When* it is that We use the World, in the *Apostle's* Phrase, as abusing it. And this *Abuse* of the World, to be sure, is the very contrary to the *right Use* of it. When the *Love* of Money becomes in Us the *Root* of all, or of any, *Evil*: When we are so under the Power of it, as to be barbarous even to *Ourselves*; When the *Riches* of this World are made the Occasions, or the Instruments, either of Unmercifulness and Hardheartedness; or of Fraud, Rapine, and Injustice to *Others*; or, of Intemperance and Madness of Pleasure, to *Ourselves*: Whenever any thing of this Sort appears, *Riches* are then grossly abused with the highest Ingratitude to GOD who bestowed them; and the greatest Inhumanity to *Society*, which ought to feel the Benefit, and good Influence, of them.

Again, When the *Honours* of this World dazle a Man's Eyes, and turn his Head giddy; so that *Right* no longer seems *Right*; nor *Wrong*, *Wrong*; but *Good* is put for *Evil*, and *Evil* for *Good*; *Bitter* for *Sweet*, and *Sweet* for *Bitter*: when Pride, and Haughtiness, and discourteous Behaviour, are the Effect of that

Dis-

SERM.

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Distinction which they give to one Man from another: when the *Passions* of the *Heart* are raised and boiled up into the *Head*, by them; and the Man can come to think himself above the Rules of *Ordinary Virtue*, and that He is privileged to be a *Sinner*, as well as a *Man*, of Distinction; then, the true Use of *Honour* is forgotten; and the *Abuse* of it is gross, and palpable, thro' the whole Behaviour of such a Person. Or, if all his Aim be to be high in the View of Men, and exalted in *Place* and *Power* above the common Level; *Ambition* then is his God; and the *Laws* of *Ambition* are the Maxims of his Conduct: and then, tho' the Laws of the true God, and the Rights of all Mankind, stand in the Way, they are but of little Force to hinder the Effect of such a *Master*.

Again, When the *Pleasures* of Sense, administered by *this World*, are made the Measures of all Good, and a Man comes to place supreme Happiness in them; when they are pursued beyond the Bounds of lawful and right; so as to break in upon his own Health, and Life; or upon the Rules of *Decency* and *Modesty*; or upon the Quiet and *Property* of *Others*; so, as to hinder him from doing God or Man that Service He might otherwise do: When Intemperance, and Luxury, and Neglect of all that is great and good, is the Effect of a Man's Attach-

Attachment to *Pleasure*, and his Love of worldly Delights; I need not say, the *Pleasures* annexed by God Almighty to Sense and sensible Objects, are then grossly and perfectly *abused*. The Man himself will come to find it, if He lives long enough to feel the pernicious Effects of such a Behaviour, which it will certainly, at length, have, upon his Mind, his Health, his Estate, his Reputation; upon every Thing which he values, even in this World, supposing him to have cast off all Regard to another to come. In a word, when the World, the *Riches*, or *Honours*, or *Pleasures*, of the World, are so regarded, or so *used*, as to be the Occasions, or Instruments, of sinning against God, our Neighbour, or our own true Interest; *then*, the *World* is used, so as to be *abused*.

From this Account, therefore, of the *Use*, and *Abuse*, of the *Riches*, *Honours*, and *Pleasures* of this State, it appears that there are two Ways of Behaviour, with respect to these Things. The *One* is such a Behaviour, as renders Us, and denominates Us truly the *Masters* of what we possess here; the *Other*, such a Behaviour as makes and denominates Us their *Slaves*: the *One* makes these good Things, our Servants; the *Other* renders them our Lords. For when we are perfectly under the Dominion of *Riches*, *Honour*, or *Pleasure*;

S E R M. so bewitched and captivated with the Love of  
 IV. any of them, as to be influenced in our Actions by them; so, as *when they say Come, to come; when they say Go, to go; and when they say Do this, to do it*: when the Case is thus, I say, it is plain, That *they* possess *Us*, and not *We, them*; that *They* are our *Masters*, not we *theirs*; that they *use Us*, as their *Slaves*, not *We, them*, as our *Servants*: For they command, and we obey. But *then* only are *We* their *Masters*, when our *Love* to them is in perfect Subjection to the *Love* of *God*, which is the *Law* of *Eternal Reason*; when we make them subservient to the End of our enjoying them, and the true Happiness of Ourselves; not guided or impelled by the unresisted Violence of Passion; but governed and tempered by the wise Influences of Reason. And now, that we may thus *use the World, as not abusing it*, We must, in the last Place, as I proposed,

IV. Consider the *Argument* here made use of by *St. Paul*; only, accommodating it to the ordinary and more general Condition of this World. *For the Fashion, or Figure, of this World passeth away*. The present Scene of Things is perpetually changing: and Another, of a very different Nature, hastning to open upon Us: Both which make up the

*Apostle's*

*Apostle's Reasoning.* There is Force enough S E R M.  
 in these *two* Considerations, to destroy that IV.  
 Devotion to this World, which is the Cause of  
 all the *Abuse* of it; and to temper our Con-  
 cern about it, so as to engage Us to *use* it as  
 we ought.


For consider, I pray you, when you have  
 amassed together an Heap of *Riches*, what is it  
 you have got? An Heap of *good Things*, if you  
 please; but good Things, liable to a thousand  
 Accidents: uncertain in their Possession; often  
 following the great Revolutions of this lower  
 World; and changing their *Masters*, with all  
 the Vicissitudes of Human Affairs. It is enough  
 to say of them, that they belong to a Scene  
 of Things, which is always in Motion, and  
 ever ready to change. A great Loss, com-  
 mon to all worldly Business; a great Mistake,  
 to which the best Heads are liable; a *Fire*,  
 an *Inundation*, a *Perfidiousness* in Those who  
 are trusted; a *popular Rage*; Many more  
 Things, to which this State is liable, have of-  
 ten changed the *Scene* of *Plenty*, and *Riches*,  
 and surprized those with Distress and Calamity,  
 who have perhaps thought themselves too se-  
 cure, and far out of the Reach of any such  
 Evils. And *then*, the Possessors themselves  
 are sure of being removed, either sooner or  
 later, from these Possessions; and this is ano-  
 ther

S E R M.

IV.

ther Change made in our Scene. *We* are taken away from the World: and so, with Respect to Us, the *Fashion of this World* truly *passeth away*, when we Ourselves pass away. For it is all one, in effect, whether *That* passeth from *Us*, or *We* pass from *that*; whether *We* are removed from our *Riches*, or our *Riches*, from *Us*. This latter *may be*, by Multitudes of unforeseen Accidents: but the Former *must* certainly *be*, one Time or other, by the unmoveable Decree of our Maker.

The same may be said with Respect to worldly *Honours*, and *Pleasures*. They must be as uncertain, as this State itself is, to which they belong: and *We* must as certainly be torn from them by Death, as we now enjoy them in Life. And the little Time we live in this World, how often do we see the *Scene of worldly Honour* changed; and the *Wheel*, that is ever turning, carrying up *one*, and bringing down *another*? The *Fashion of this World* passeth away, when the *Scene of Honour* is changed: and that *Scene* is as often turned upside down, as *Favour*, and *Opinion*, and a thousand unforeseen *Accidents*, work. And, as to *Pleasure*; Men die to *that*; even before they die to Nature. It becomes insipid to them, even whilst they are alive. The *Scene of that* changes, whilst they look on: and they grow insen-

insensible, whether they will or no, and un- SERM.  
 moved by what used to give them the greatest IV.  
 Satisfaction. 

But then, as *this Scene* changeth continually, and at last is quite removed, there is *Another* to succeed, so unlike it, so opposite to it, that the same *Riches* are no *Riches*; the same *Honours* no *Honours*; the same *Pleasures* no *Pleasures*, when that appears. Your *Mony*, if you could carry it with You, is not current in that other State: Your *Honours* are *there*, as *faded Garlands*, dead and gone. Your *Pleasures* will there have no Attraction or Influence; because They will have no being.

What little Reason, therefore, have We to *abuse* them in this State, by overvaluing them, or by employing them to ill Purposes; when the *Scene* that is to succeed is of such a Nature that they will be all useless in it; and the very Memory of them insipid: and especially, when the only Mention to be made of them at the opening of that New State of Things, will be, upon Occasion of a strict and tremendous Enquiry, how We have used them in this? The *Charity*, the *Humanity*, the *Generosity*, that have accompanied *Riches*, will then be the only Advantage and Gain of the *Rich Man*: the *Modersty*, the *Humility*, the *Meanness*, that have attended the *Honours* of this World, will

S E R M. be the only Glory of the *Honourable* : and the  
 IV. *Temperance*, and *Moderation*, that have been  
 used in the Pursuit and Enjoyment of *Pleasure*,  
 will then be the only *Happiness* of such as  
 have had the *Pleasures* of this World at their  
 Command.

The Sum of what hath been said, is this.  
*The Fashion of this World passeth away. But  
 the Fashion of Another World, which passeth  
 not away, succeeds to it. And therefore, let  
 Us use this World, as not abusing it ; and let  
 our Hearts, and our Treasure, be in that other  
 future, never ending, State ; in which we are  
 all infinitely concerned.*



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*Of the Love of PLEASURE.*


S E R M O N V.

Preached before the KING, *March 10,*  
1727-8.

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2 TIMOTHY iii. 4.

*Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God.*

**I**N an *Age* of Gaiety and Luxury, which, SERM  
if we had a mind to distinguish it from v.  
other Ages, we might justly call the *Age*   
of *Pleasure*; and in a *Country*, where the Taste  
and Pursuit of *Pleasure* have been carried to as  
high a Pitch of Elegance and Extravagance,  
as Invention and Wealth can well stretch them;  
and in an *Assembly*, in which many of Those  
present have all the Advantages which Power  
and Riches can put into their Hands for the  
full Enjoyment of *Pleasure*: it cannot be impro-  
per; Nay, it must be agreeable to the peculiar  
*End of Preaching*; to spend some Time in lead-  
ing Men to just and reasonable Thoughts upon a

SERM. Subject in which their Happiness, even in their  
 v. own Opinion, is so deeply concerned.

Let not what I have now proposed give you any Fears that I am so absurd, as to attempt to rob you of so great and darling a *Good*, as *Pleasure*; or to persuade you into such a *State of insensibility*, or *Pain*, as neither *Human Nature* can admit of, nor Reason, or GOD, require. My Design is quite the Contrary. I am going to be an *Advocate* for *Pleasure*; and to shew you, as well as I can, how you may enjoy it more effectually, by enjoying it more sincere, and less mixed with *Unhappiness*, as well as for a longer Duration, even in *this Life*, than you can possibly hope to do in any other Method. This is all the *Mortification* you shall hear of, from Me, in *this Season* (so called) of *Mortification*: *A Mortification!* which will, I am confident, *mortify* and kill only the *Pains*, and *Unpleasantnesses* of Life; but enliven and prolong the *Pleasures* of it; and such an *One*, as is perfectly agreeable to the *Christian Religion* itself, which came from Heaven not to dissolve any of the Laws of Nature, or to destroy the natural Connexion of any one thing to another; but to add the Motives of the World to come, to those Dictates of *Reason*, which are still left as the unalterable Rule of our Conduct, in such Cases

as this now before Us. And, in answering the End I have proposed, I shall

S E R M.  
v.  
~~~~~

I. Shew what I mean by the *Pleasures* I am going to speak of: And,

II. Make some *Observations*, chiefly upon the *Two* different, or contrary, Methods of pursuing these *Pleasures*. And from these you will easily judge,

III. On which Side the *Advantage* manifestly lyes, in the Point of *Pleasure* itself.

I. Under the *first* of these, I will not be so unfair as to mean One Thing, whilst, I know, Those, who are most concerned, mean Another. The Word *Pleasure*, is now, by long Custom in common Discourse, come to be appropriated to the *Gratifications of our Senses*, properly so called. And when we speak of a *Man of Pleasure*, we are always understood to mean, One who is, in a peculiar Manner, a Follower of the *Pleasures of Sense*. The *Covetous* Man has, without doubt, his *Pleasures*, adapted to his own Narrowness of Soul, and inordinate Appetite after *Money*; even that Abundance of it which is quite useless to Himself. The *Ambitious* has likewise *Pleasures*, in the Elevation of Himself above Others, and in the flattering Hope of a still greater Height,

S E R M. abstracted from other Gratifications. The

v. Man of *Virtue*, that is, of true *Honour*, has *Pleasures*, infinitely superior to both, immediately and directly resulting from the inward *Disposition* of his Mind. But These are not the *Pleasures* we mean when we use the Word by itself, in Discourse: but the *Idea* which always goes along with it, is That of the *Pleasures*, or *Gratifications*, of *Sense*, properly so called. And it is with regard to *These* peculiarly that I now speak. After I have said this, the

II. Next Step is to offer, as I proposed, such *Observations* upon this Subject as will lead us to that true Judgment upon the Whole, without which all Boasts of *Pleasure* are but vain Words; and by which alone we can justly pretend to settle any Title to that *Good*, which, with so much Passion, we are seeking after. And this, I think, cannot be done better than by considering the *Circumstances*, and *Consequences*, of the *different* Conduct of Men, in their Pursuit, and Enjoyment, of this Good: neither aggravating the *Unhappineses* of *One* Sort; nor exalting, more than is undeniably just, the *Happineses* of the *Other*.

I. In the *first* Place, with regard to *Those* who have entered, without Reason or Moderation,

ration, into this Field of *Pleasure*; No one of S E R M. themselves can deny, what too many know v. by conscious and sensible Experience, that there is a *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*, (of That I mean which must be allowed to be *Pleasure*,) which, by natural Consequence, introduces a Scene of *Pain* and *Bodily Uneasiness*; as really *Pain*, (and much more lasting,) as the *Pleasure* itself was *Pleasure*, which was the sole Cause of it.

Nor can it be denied that, in some Cases, the Pursuit of *Pleasure*, made eager by the present ungoverned Passions of the *Pursuer*, is seen, in a little Time, to lay waste the very Support of *Pleasure* itself; and, by the Excess of Extravagance, to bring on such temporal Inconveniences, as change the Scene entirely from a *short* Scene of *Rioting* in *Joy*, to a *long* one of sensible *Grief* and *Sorrow*, when He finds Himself deprived of the very Possibility of going on in the same Course. For this must be the Case of *Pleasure*, wherever *Passion* will know no Bounds; considering that the *Riches* of the Pursuer, tho' great as you please, upon this Supposition, must be soon wasted to Nothing.

But if such immediate Evils are, by a cautious Prudence, avoided by Some, it may still be said, that there is often seen, in their Ex-
amples

S E R M. amples, a Pursuit of *Pleasure*, founded upon
 v. a *Scheme* of Dishonour; and this is always
 accompanied by uninterrupted *Cares*; carried
 on with numberless *Anxieties*; successful perhaps for a Length of Time; but, when an End is put to it by any unlucky *Event*, naturally followed by *Uneasinesses*, which outweigh all the Remembrance, and efface every Image, of what was once thought *Pleasure*. For, before Men have quite put off Humanity, the Reflexion of a *wounded Spirit*, and the Regret of a sensible Heart, are, in some Events, such Effects of this *Pursuit*, as change the sweetest *Honey* into the bitterest *Gall*; even in the Minds of Those who think of *this Life* only.

This is indeed, a *Pursuit of Pleasure*, so unworthy of human Nature, and so dishonourable, in the Estimation of the Generality of Mankind; that, as *Shame* for ever follows it, so must the *Fear* of Discovery always attend it. And this is a Companion, alone sufficient to destroy the very *Essence of Pleasure* itself, in any Mind not totally lost to all Generous Sentiments within.

You may observe that I have not, in these Instances, so much as mentioned any *Remorse* of Mind, but that caused by the *present* Evils of a too eager *Pursuit of Pleasure*;

nor any Miseries but those of the *present* S E R M.
 State, introduced by it. But, as *Conscience* v.
 is *Reason* itself, first guiding Us, and then
 censuring Us; as *Reason* is the Gift of God to
 all Men, for their Government; and *Pleasure*
 is his gracious *Law*, for the Good, and not for
 the Ruine, of his Creatures; it is impossible
 that there should not be a Remorse of Another
 Sort, and an inward Distress, in all well
 formed Souls, following upon such *Pursuits*
 of *Pleasure* mentioned before, as evidently are
 Contradictions to the Will of that God who
 made Us what we are, and placed Us in this
 State, surrounded with sensible Objects; In-
 stances of the highest *Ingratitude* to Him,
 who formed us capable of *Pleasure*; *Injuries*
 to our Neighbours, who have a Title to our
 good Offices; and, in some Cases, gross *Vic-*
lations of the Laws of *Society*, for which our
 great Creator made Us.

2. *Secondly*, I will now go on to observe
 the opposite Maxims of pursuing, and enjoy-
 ing, the same Good: and these are such
 as make the *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*, entirely
 different, in every *Circumstance*, and *Conse-*
quence, from the former. For this Pursuit
 and Enjoyment of *Pleasure*, under the Con-
 duct of *Reason* and *Moderation*, is undeniably
 such a *Pursuit* of it, as does *not* bring on a State

SERM. of Bodily Pain and Indisposition, as its natural or probable Consequence. It is such a Pursuit of Pleasure, as is free from that long Train of Fears and Anxieties, which never fail to attend upon the contrary Pursuit; unacquainted with any Disappointments but what the common Condition of human Life makes unavoidable; and untroubled with any Remorse of Evils procured to Others, by the Man's passionate Regard to his own Pleasure only. It is such a Pursuit of Pleasure, as does not waste or destroy that Fortune which is necessary for the Purposes of the most innocent Enjoyments of Life themselves; and such a Pursuit, as carries no Shame along with it, in the Judgment of the World about Us. In a word, it is such a Pursuit, as is a Mark of Gratitude to the Giver of all our Faculties of Pleasure Themselves, and of all the Pleasures about which they can at any Time be conversant. And, being no Violation of any one of his Laws; no Breach into the universal System of Good and Right; carrying with it no Evil to the Members of human Society, or to the Publick; It cannot be the Parent of any inward Distress or Anguish of Mind; nor consequently end either in Repentance here, or Punishment hereafter.

Thus stands, in general, the Difference of the two Pursuits. And now,


III. On which Side, the *Advantage* lies, SER M.
 even in the Point of *Pleasure* itself, is next to
 be considered. v.

Now, in the stating of This, we must imitate the Men of worldly Business, in the *Method* of stating their *Profit* or *Loss*, which They follow so as not to impose either upon Others or Themselves. If never so many of the particular *Articles* in their Account are real *Profit*, but yet have themselves been the Occasions of *Loss* or *Disadvantage*, more than proportionable to it; the Sum of such an Account cannot be *Profit*: and if the *Balance* at the *End* be *Loss*; it is small Comfort to them, and little Matter of Boasting, that there are in it particular *Articles* of *Gain*, and those, perhaps, very considerable. It is from the *Total Amount*, that they judge: as That alone, by which their Condition in Business must be determined.

And thus it must be in the Case of *Pleasure*. Put down, if you please, all the *Gratifications* of Sense, you can think of. Let them be magnified and swelled to as high a Pitch as an Imagination devoted to them can do it. But be just in not deceiving yourselves. Put down, before you pretend to judge of the *Whole*, all the *Pain* of *Body* and *Mind*; the Diseases, the Calamities, which were the Result of them:
 the

SERM. the Fears, and Anxieties, and Disappointments,
 v. which attended them: the Ruine, in some
 Cases, of Fortune and Estate; in some, of *Reputation* and *Honour*; in others, the lasting *Wound* of *Remorse*, in the Reflexion upon what, it may be, has produced Miseries somewhere or other, never to be retrieved, and never to be alleviated; and in All, the inward Uneasiness natural to a reasonable Being, in every Step of Life, which Reason does not approve of. Put into the Account every known *evil* Consequence under the Notion of *Pain*, the opposite of *Pleasure*; and then it must come out thus. If the total Amount of such a *Pursuit* of *Pleasure*, be really found, as it must be, to be *Pain*, of the several sorts before mentioned, naturally produced by it; and this more than sufficient to counter-balance every *Article* of *Pleasure* in it: the Man of *Pleasure* himself, to whom the Name is now appropriated, the Man who pretends to study and follow after *Pleasure* as his great Good, must be found, at last, not to understand what it is truly to enjoy *Pleasure* itself; nay, frequently to destroy his own Purposes, by shortening and ruining his own *Pleasures*.

On the contrary, the Man of *Virtue*, who is also the Man of true *Honour*; who enjoys the *Pleasures* of *Sense* under those Rules which

which make them fit perfectly easy upon his SERM.
Mind, his *Body*, his *Estate*, his *Reputation*; v.
 must be acknowledged, in the *Whole*, by 
 the natural Operation of Virtue, and by the
Wisdom of God, in establishing the Nature
 and Relation of Man, and all things around
 him, far to exceed the *Other* at the *Close*
 of the *Account*; and to triumph just as much
 over Him, in *Pleasure* itself, as he does in
Virtue, *Innocence*, and *Honour*. I say, in the
Whole; because, as I am free to acknow-
 ledge, on the one hand, that there are *Plea-*
sures, in the Sense in which We now use the
 Word, to the *Man of Pleasure*, which to the
Man of Virtue are wholly unknown; yet, it
 is certainly true, that Judgment must be made
 from the *Whole*, and not from a *Part*; and
 that, upon the foot of the *Whole*, it is undeni-
 able that the *Man of Virtue* enjoys *Pleasure*,
 more *sincere*, i. e. more free from the Mixture
 of any of those *Pains* and *Evils* which are its
 natural Consequences to others; and with
 much more Security of continuing so to do;
 than the *Man of Pleasure* can pretend to do.
 To which We may add this disagreeable Cir-
 cumstance, that the Course of *Pleasure* which
 the *Voluptuary* runs so precipitately, is *first* in
 Time; and that the Course of *Evils* which are
 its Produce, succeeds; and lasts often long
 after

SERM. after the whole Scene of *Pleasure* is vanished.

v. And certainly, it is less tolerable to *human Nature*, to pass from *Pleasure* to a State of *Pain*, than to pass thro' a Course of *Pain* to a settled State of *Pleasure*. To which We may add, That, as these two enhance one another, the *Pleasure past* must give the Man a *double* Sense of that *Pain*, which not only succeeds it, but is really owing to it.

The great *Doctor* of *Pleasure* in the *Heathen* World, who had, with equal Stupidity and Impiety, banished *Providence* out of the World, and took into his Account *this Life* only, saw plainly the Importance of *Virtue*, in order to the Enjoyment of *Pleasure* itself. And tho' his Doctrine, by unhappily placing the *Chief Good* of Man in *Pleasure*, not strictly explained, led his rash Followers into the most intemperate *Pursuits* of their own *Unhappiness* under that Notion; yet his *Example*; and the Temperance and Command of Passion, by which He enjoyed and prolonged his own *Pleasures*, were, indeed, a Reproach to *Them*, who would not interpret his *Maxim* by his own *Practice*. I only just mention this, to shew that even *He*, who studied *Pleasure* only, put the *Virtue* of *Temperance*, or the Command of present Appetite, into the very Composition of *Pleasure* itself. To return,

The

The great Mistake in this Matter, amongst S E R M. the Men of *Pleasure*, seems to lye in this, that v. they do not make *Pleasure*, and *Happiness*, two distinct Considerations: or rather, that they never inquire after *Happiness*, but are only for ever seeking after particular Instances of *sensible Pleasure*, and ready to fall in with every Invitation to them. Whereas *Pleasure* and *Happiness* stand, even in common Discourse, for two so different Things, that no One, by a *Man of Pleasure* understands you to mean a *Happy Man*; but rather, a *Man* who disregards *Happiness* for the Sake of particular Instances of *Pleasure*. For *Happiness* being a State of Mind, of a better and more fixt Nature than the sudden Starts and *Passions* of Mankind; it must follow, that, if the passionate *Pursuits* of any real or imagined *Pleasure*, break in upon *that Happiness*, which is the true *Happiness* of an Animal endowed with Reason to direct the Conduct of his Life; then, the Man, meanly and ignobly, enjoys *Pleasure*, without being in a State of *Happiness*.

And from hence a most important *Truth* flows: *viz.* That, if the *total Amount* of the Pursuit of *sensible Pleasures* be *not* a settled State of *Inward Happiness*, but the contrary; the *Pursuit* has been irregular and unworthy of a *Creature* to whom God has given the *Capacity*, and

SERM. Occasions, of such *Pleasure*; and that these unreasonable *Pursuers* of this attracting Appearance, have, by their passionate uncontrolled *Love of Pleasure*, shewn that they have no Knowledge of what *Happiness* is; and are quite Strangers to their own greatest Good: And that *Others*, who have observed the contrary Rules in all their Gratifications, have really, and truly, enjoyed *Pleasure* itself in such a Manner, that it has not interrupted their *Happiness*; nay, that it has contributed to as good a State of *Happiness*, as Man can hope to attain in this present short, uncertain, Life.

Thus have I been an *Advocate for Pleasure*, as I at first promised; and not against it. I allow *Man*, as framed in the Manner he is, by his Creator, and placed in *this State*, surrounded with Objects of all his Senses, to be unavoidably, by his Nature, and by the *Law of Creation*, which constituted the Relations of Things, a *Lover of Pleasure*. My great Point has been, to shew you the true, and most lasting, Way of enjoying this *Good*. And, if I have been speaking to any Purpose all this Time, the *only good Rule* must be, to be *Virtuous*, in order to enjoy *Pleasure*; at the first Sound, perhaps, to many Ears, a surprizing, dull, and unacceptable *Rule*: but to Those who will give it but a few Minutes Consideration, a certain *Truth*;
a *Rule*

a Rule demonstrable, from Nature and Experience, to be a Friend to *Pleasure*, by ennobling it; by extending it beyond the Limits which ungoverned *Passion* will ever confine it to; and by freeing it from those Mixtures of *Evil* and *Pain*, which the contrary Rule will certainly throw into it.

You see, then, that, in the Account of Reason, which always considers all the Circumstances and mutual *Relations* of Things, the *Love of Pleasure* is not, in itself, a Crime; but, indeed, the *Law of God*, who created Man what He is, and placed Him in such a World as This; and is himself the *Author* of that *Pleasure*, which necessarily results from his own Works, and his own Will. You will see, if you go a Step farther, that Reason itself will support the *severe Censure* of the *Apostle*, in the *Text*, fixt upon Those, *not* who are *Lovers of Pleasure* (for the *Apostle* does not rest his *Censure* there) but who are *Lovers of Pleasure*, more than *Lovers of GOD*: *i. e.* who prefer the passionate *Pursuit* of particular Instances of *Pleasure*, before the Regard due to the *Laws* of that *God*, who is the great *Author* of *Pleasure* itself, to whom they owe the very Possibility of enjoying it.

Let us, therefore, from *This*, and from what has been said, argue, that They, who

SERM. v. pursue *Pleasure* in Contradiction to the *Laws* of God, or to his Dishonour, are ungrateful to *Him*, who alone gave them this Good, by being *Lovers* of *Pleasure* more than *Lovers* of *God*: that They who pursue it in any Instances, in *Violation* of the Peace and Rights of Neighbourhood, are very bad Members of *Society*, by being *Lovers* of *Pleasure* more than *Lovers* of their *Neighbours*: and that They, who pursue it to the Hurt or Ruine of their own *Honour*, *Reputation*, *Estate*, *Health*, and *Families*, are unjust to their own Interests, by being, truly, *Lovers* of *Pleasure* more than *Lovers* of *Themselves*, in that Sense in which they ought to be so; exposing *Themselves*, for the Sake of a present violent *Passion*, to the Loss of every thing dear in this World; even of all *their own Happiness*, which can never subsist, but under the Direction of *Virtue*.

To summ up the Whole of what is justly to be said; If We chuse to consider Ourselves as Beings concerned chiefly in the finding out, and enjoying, the *Pleasures* of *this World* only; it is most certainly true, That, in this View only, however the Unexperienced may flatter themselves, the Course of *Pleasure* must, and will, be *limited* by something or other; and the *wild Pursuer* must, and will, be *stopt*, by some *Obstacle* or other, in his *Career*. And

whether any Man will not be more easy, and satisfied, in the Reflexion that good Reasons, though of *present* Concernment only, have prevented the utter Ruine of his *Happiness*, by confining his *Pleasures* within the Bounds of *Just* and *Right*, than in the Thought of having left them to be totally *stopped*, and destroyed, by the natural Consequences only of his own unrestrained *Passion*; let Himself judge.

But, if We will be so just to Ourselves, as not to stop here; but to go, as We ought, into a Course of Thoughts much more worthy of such Creatures as We are; If We would look farther into Ourselves, and consider our own Frames; and also the main Design of our great Master, *Christ* himself, in coming into the World; We could not but find still plainer Demonstrations, that *Reason* was given Us to govern the *Love of Pleasure*. For We should very clearly see, That, as We have Faculties adapted to sensible Objects in this short Life; so We have Others, of an higher Nature, to govern them, which look forward, towards a better State to come: That We are made with such Capacities, and such Powers, of Reasoning, Reflexion, and Judgment upon our own Conduct, as will force Us to acknowledge ourselves capable of being called to a strict Account, and framed exactly as We should have been, up-

SERM. on the Supposition that so it will be : That, as
 v. it is perfectly agreeable to the Reason of Man-
 kind to expect it, so our Blessed Lord, by a
 plain Declaration, sufficiently attested by his Re-
 surrection from the Dead, has assured the World
 that such a solemn Day of *Account* will come,
 in which the Triumph will belong to Those,
 who have here below kept the *Love of Plea-
 sure* in Subjection to the *Love* of Virtue, and
 true *Happiness*; and Shame and Distress to
 Those, who have been *Lovers of Pleasure*,
 more than *Lovers of God*, their *Neighbours*, or
Themselves. And These will be such *Argu-
 ments*, as will set us above every Allurement;
 and engage us to live the present Life by that
Religious Wisdom, whose *Ways are Ways of Plea-
 santness*, and all whose *Paths are Peace*: and
 will certainly conduct us safe, thro' a short de-
 lusive *Scene* of the fleeting *Images of Pleasure*
 only, to the real and lasting *Pleasures* of a State
 of *Happiness*, never more to be interrupted, ei-
 ther by our own *Passions*, or any other
 Enemy.

St. PAUL'S *Discourse* to FELIX.

S E R M O N VI.

Preached before the KING, *Febr.* 15,
1729-30.

ACTS xxiv. part of 24th and 25th Verses.

He sent for Paul, and heard Him concerning the Faith in Christ: And as He reasoned of Righteousness, Temperance, and Judgment to come, Felix trembled.

THE Persons here spoken of are, St. SERM.
Paul, a faithful Preacher of the Gospel VI.
of *Jesus Christ*; and *Felix*, the Governour of *Judea*: *St Paul*, now a Prisoner, under the Apprehension of all the Evils which the Malice and Importunity of the Whole Body of the *Jews* might extort from their Governour, now his Judge: and a Governour, whose personal Character, it appears from a *Roman Historian*, as well as from what is said of Him in this Chapter, might well have increased the

SERM.

VI.



Apostle's Apprehensions of the most unjust and severe Sentence which *Power*, in the Hands of such a Man, could threaten; and, what is still more, a *Governor* accompanied, at this very Time, by *One* who had a Share in his Guilt, and an Influence over his Passions. And yet, in the Midst of all these Circumstances, we find a very uncommon Appearance; the *Prisoner*, undaunted and unconcerned at his own Danger; the *Governour*, terrified and *trembling*, as if his *Prisoner* had been his *Judge*; and were now pronouncing a Sentence of Condemnation upon him. What was the Reason of this surprizing Event? Innocence, and the Testimony of an upright Heart, on the One Side; Guilt, and the Reproaches of an awakened Conscience, on the Other. The *Former* created in *St. Paul* a Boldness to adapt his *Discourse* to the Case of the great Man he spoke to, whose Character, it is evident, he well knew: the *Latter* enfeebled the Heart of *Felix*, and forced Him to betray that Fear of future Punishment, from a superior Power, which all the Amusements and Pleasures of this World can hardly ever totally remove from Guilt and Sin.

As my present Design is to make this Account of *St. Paul's Discourse* to *Felix* the Occasion of such Observations as are of universal Importance to all *Christians*: the *Three*
Points

Points which immediately offer themselves to my Thoughts are These :

SERM.
VI.

I. The Notion St. *Paul* had of preaching *Jesus Christ*, and *his Faith*.

II. The Agreeableness of This to the whole *Tenor* of the *New Testament*. And

III. The great Use, towards the main *End* of the *Gospel*, of the *Argument* drawn from a *Judgment* to come, to such Creatures as We are.

And if I apply this particularly to Those in the *Higher* Stations of human Life, it is because I think it the greatest Instance of Duty, and the best Good-Office, which any One, who speaks from This Place, can possibly perform.


I. We cannot but observe from this Passage, what St. *Paul's* Notion must have been of Preaching the *Faith* of *Christ*, so as to answer the main End of it.

It is expressly told us, that *Felix* sent for *Paul*, in order to hear Him concerning the *Faith* in *Christ*; concerning that Religion, for the Sake of which he was now in Bonds. There can be no Doubt but that St. *Paul* placed in the best Light, all the Evidences for believing in *Jesus Christ*, and particularly his
Re-

SERM. *Resurrection* from the Dead; which was to

VI. him instead of All, and to which it was his

Custom always to appeal. But, it is as plain that, in describing to *Felix* the Complexion and Genius of the *Christian Faith*, and the great End of *Christ's* coming into the World, He represented it as enforcing all those Points of *Virtue* and *Morality*, to which Men are obliged as the reasonable Creatures of an Holy and Just God; fitted and designed by Him for the mutual Offices of Society. For the only Part of the *Apostle's* Discourse about *Faith* in *Christ*, or the *Religion* of *Christ*, which the sacred *Historian* has thought fit to leave us relates solely to *These*, and to the Great Mouve to practise Them. The Words are very remarkable. In this *private Sermon* about *Christ*, and *Faith* in Him, upon which alone *St. Paul* was desired by *Felix*, to speak, He *reasons* (as the Word is well rendered) or *argues*, in his Discourse. He shews him the *Nature* of the *Faith* in *Christ*, by shewing him the unalterable Obligations to *Righteousness*, which includes all Justice and Equity; to *Temperance*, or, a Command over our Appetites; and then, by displaying before Him the *Judgment* to come, as the great and awful Motive urged by the *Gospel* of *Christ*, to secure and restore the Practice of these, and all

all other Branches of Morality. It is by *this* SERM.
 Method that He did honour to his Master, VI.
 and to that *Faith* he had embraced; and 
 by *this*, that he endeavoured to represent
 the coming of *Christ* into the World as worthy
 of God who sent him.


If St. *Paul*, therefore, *reasoned* upon these
 Duties; and, in setting forth the Excellencies
 of the *Christian Faith*, described and inculcat-
 ed *Morality*, as the great End of it; and
 thought he could do nothing more for its Ho-
 nour, than to represent it as joined in the
 same Cause with Reason and uncorrupted Na-
 ture; as enforcing the same Practice of all the
 moral and social *Duties*; and reveling the
Wrath of God against all *Immorality*: this is
 Evidence enough of the Apostle's Notion of
 the Nature and End of the *Christian Religion*;
 and will be the Justification of All Those who
 follow him in this way of Preaching *Christ*,
 and his *Faith*. But I will go a Step farther,
 and observe,

II. That the Representations made through-
 out the *New Testament*, of the great *End* both
 of Preaching and Receiving the *Faith* of
Christ; and particularly, the Accounts given
 of that *Judgment to come*, which is mentioned
 in the *Text*, do all exactly and uniformly an-
 swer to this Notion.

SERM.

The Fore-runner of our *Lord* opened the

VI. Scene by giving Notice to all Sinners around

 Him, of the Nature of that *Kingdom of God* which was then beginning to shew itself: That it did not consist in imaginary, or Real, Privileges of *One Sort* of Men, or of *One Nation*, above Another; but that All who would flee from Misery, or enjoy the Blessings of such a *Dispensation*, must *repent*, so as to *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance*.

When our Blessed *Lord* himself began to teach the Nature and End of his own coming; it was by preaching *Repentance*, that is, *Amendment*: and, as soon as ever He discovered any false Imagination in his first Followers, as if he was come to flatter their Pride, or to indulge their bad Inclinations; He took the first *Opportunity* immediately to make them sensible of their Mistake. To this Purpose are these solemn Declarations; That it is not their taking *Him* for their *Master*, or the *calling Him their Lord*, that would entitle them to the Happiness He promised; but *the doing the Will of His Father*, the Maker and Governour of all Things: That, in order to be the Children of *God*, and to have the Privileges of such, They must constantly obey, and imitate, (as far as Humanity will permit) all the Moral Perfections of their Heavenly Father.

And

And to the same purpose is every other Expression of his, in which he professedly delineated to them the main Strokes of his *Religion*, or taught Them the *End* of his *Appearance*. SERM.
VI.

His *Apostles* and immediate *Disciples* followed Him close in this main Point, after They themselves were instructed in it. St. *Peter*, in his first Preaching, declared to the *Jews*, that God sent his Son to *blefs us, by turning us from our Iniquities*; or, as the Words rather import, to blefs us, as far as we turn, or in our *turning*, or being *turned*, from our Iniquities, to the Practice of all Virtue. And, in his first Epistle, He represents One great End of *Christ's* Suffering to be, that We may *follow the Example of his Patience*; and declares that He *bare our Sins upon the Cross*, to this Intent, *that We, being dead unto Sin, should live unto Righteousness*. And in This they all un-animously agree, even whilst they speak of his *Death*, under the Notion of a *Sacrifice*, or a *Propitiation, for our Sins*; expressly taking Care to make this itself a Lesson of *Morality*, by declaring no Sins to have any Title to any Benefit from it, but such as are forsaken; and all Immorality to receive a fresh *Aggravation*, instead of any *Indulgence*, from it.

The *Life*, therefore, of our *Saviour* was designed for our *Pattern* in all *Morality*. His

Doctrine

SERM. VI. *Doctrin*e was to lead us to the *Imitation* of God, and to the Practice of the Law of uncorrupted Reason, which He always supposed; and to which he always appealed: and this is *Morality*. His *Death* was to engage Us to himself, *i. e.* to the stricter Observation of his Laws, which are the *Laws* of *Morality*. The Doctrine of *Forgiveness* of *Sins*, openly promulged by Him, is ever confined to *Sins* that are forsaken. *Prayer* to the Supreme God, (that great Duty) is an Instance of *Morality*, and is the Dictate of Reason and Nature, as well as the Command of Revelation; and leads us, in its End, and natural Operation upon ourselves, to a greater Sense of all our whole *moral* Duty. And, if We go from hence to the two *Positive Institutions* mentioned in the *New Testament*; We shall find *their* Design to be the same Interest of *Morality*.

The *first* of them, *Baptism*, or the *Ceremony* of Immersion in Water, used in receiving Persons converted to the *Faith* of *Christ*, is constantly declared to be thus intended. It is never described as a *Charm*, or a mere *Privilege*. On the contrary, the Thing signified by it is magnified by St. *Peter*, in Opposition to the Ceremony itself; *the Answer of a good Conscience*, to the *Washing* of the *Outside*. And St. *Paul*, in a most remarkable Manner (*Rom. vi.*) declares

declares the whole Ceremony to represent to SERM.
Christians their *Death* unto *Sin*; and their *Life* VI.
 unto *Righteousness*: the former, by their being
 covered with the *Water*; and the latter, by
 their rising out of the *Water* again. And, in
 the Nature of the Thing, it is plainly the Ce-
 remony of admitting Men into a *Religion* which
 revives all the Obligations of *Morality* upon
 them, and enforces them more strongly than
 any other in the World. The other Institution
 is, the Remembrance of *Jesus Christ*, in the
Lord's Supper; that is, in plain Words, a Re-
 membrance of that *Master* who taught us the
 absolute Necessity of *Morality*, or *Virtue*, to
 our *Happiness*: and particularly, the Remem-
 brance of his *Death*, which was the greatest
 Example of many *Virtues* to be practised by us
 in this imperfect and afflicted State; and which
 is sufficiently declared to be no Advantage to
 his Followers, but as it moves *All, who name*
the Name of Christ, to depart from Iniquity. And
 if we speak of *Them*, in the more modern
 Phrase, as *The Means of Grace*; the very Ex-
 pression denotes their *End* to be something
 higher than the *Ceremonies* themselves; and
 signifies either that *Christian Virtue*, by some
 called *Grace*, is the *End* to which they are
 subservient; or that they are *Means* to pro-
 cure the *Divine Assistance*, another Significa-
 tion

SERM. tion of the Word *Grace*: which *Assistance* is
 VI. allowed to have that higher *End* in view, of
 our Improvement in all *Morality*.

Thus the *Believing* in *Christ*; and the coming into His Religion, and the Remembrance of Him when we are in it; are all adapted, and in their Natures subservient, to One and the same great End; the engaging us to abhor all Immorality, and to proceed to the highest Perfection we can, in every Instance of *Morality*.

Take away this one great Point; and, I fear, it will be impossible to convince any reasonable Man that *Jesus Christ* was sent into the World by God. One of the noblest Arguments, I am sure, drawn from this *Design* of the *Gospel*, worthy of God and Man, will be for ever removed from *Christianity*: and where, without This, the Advocates for it can find any Others, truly sufficient, I know not. Nay, if either *Reason*, or the *Gospel*, tell us Truth about the Dispositions either of God, the *Father* of all Things; or of the *Son* of God, towards Mankind; it is not supposable that *Jesus Christ* would have been sent into this World, and have lived here, to preach to Men, but in Order to their Perfection in Virtue; and much less, that He would have died for Men, but expressly in order to their Living, as becomes *Men*.

Thus,

Thus, We see, the *Religion* founded on S E R M.
Faith, or *Belief*, in *Jesus Christ*, is *preached*;
 and *Christ* himself is *preached*; when the strict VI.
 Obligations to *all Righteousness* are *preach-*
ed and inculcated, agreeably to the End of
 his coming into the World. To this Purpose
 alone is the Declaration which *St. Paul* made
 to *Titus*, in order to give him a comprehensive
 View of the *Nature of Christianity*; and this
 so full an one, that it may well deserve a Place
 here, *viz.* That the *Grace*, or *Mercy*, of *God*,
bringing Salvation unto all Men, hath appeared,
 in the *Gospel*, *teaching us* (as the only way in
 which it brings Salvation) *that, denying Ungod-*
liness and worldly Lusts, We should live Soberly,
Righteously, and Godly in this World; waiting
 for the *Appearance of Jesus Christ, who gave*
Himself for Us, (for this very End, here pointed
 out,) *viz. That he might redeem us from all Ini-*
quity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar People
zealous of Good Works.

To all this agrees, also, every Account we
 have in the *New Testament*, both of the *Pro-*
ceedings at the Solemn Day of *Judgment*, men-
 tioned in the *Text*; and of the *Rewards* and
Punishments to be dispensed to Men, in Con-
 sequence of that *Judgment*. In all of them
 Nothing but *Immerality* is declared to be pu-
 nished; nothing but *Morality* and *Virtue*, to be

S E R M.

VI.



be rewarded. The *Pretenders* to the *Favor* of their Master, at that Day, who are declared to be rejected by our Lord, in his own Account, are introduced by Him as pleading a certain Title to his *Favor* from their *Zeal*, and *Faith*, by which they have *professed* in his Name, and in his Name even worked *Miracles*. But they are to depart from Him into Punishment, with all their Pretenses about them, merely because they were *Workers* of *Iniquity*. But the *Good*, and *Beneficent*, are entertained with Praise, and invited into the *Kingdom prepared for them*.

No mention is made of Any condemned, who can plead that they have sincerely endeavoured to find out the Will of God, and have preferred it before all other Considerations. No Sentence pronounced against such for Errors in Judgment, through the unavoidable Weakness of human Nature: but the Integrity and Morality of All accepted and applauded. One cannot help, as we pass, being led, by our Saviour's own Account, to think how many Pretenses will the more *modern Ages of Christianity* furnish out at that Day? Have we not transgressed all the moral Laws of God and Nature, to shew our Zeal for what we call Religion? will many say: And how greatly surprized will they be, to find That all their

Inquisitions,

Inquisitions, and *Racks*, and *Tortures*, and *Hardships*, and *Oppressions*, and even the Merit of overturning all the Boundaries of Good and Evil, for the *Faith* of *Christ*, blasphemously so called; for the *Honour* of *His Mother*; or the extending the Bounds of *his Church*; will be esteemed by their *Lord* himself as Instances of their Guilt; and the highest Injuries to Himself? And how much more surprized, to find the *Excommunicated*, and the *Persecuted*, and *Those* to whom they would not allow the Name of *Christian*, or the Usage due to a *Man*, now called forth into Glory, and honoured in the *Sight* of *Men* and *Angels*, as the true *Children of God*; as having sincerely loved him, and practised all his moral Laws?

Infidelity itself (I hope it may be said without Offence) will then be punished no otherwise than as it is *Immorality*, proceeding from a wilful and resolute Neglect of *Evidence*, or an *immoral* Contradiction to it. And *Faith* itself will then be rewarded, no otherwise than as *Morality* in an *intelligent* Agent; the Result of the honest Enquiry of a well-disposed Mind. Or rather, the *Immorality* of the *Will*, leading at any Time to *Infidelity*; and the *Immorality* of *Practice* proceeding from it; are the Things only to be punished: and the *Moral* good *Disposition* leading to *Faith*, and the *Moral* Prac-

SERM. *tice* following from it, to be the only proper
 VI. Objects of *Reward*; agreeably to all that is
 said in the *New Testament*. For in *That*, We
 may observe, there is not any *Faith* celebrated,
 but either as the Word is taken for the *Gospel-Dispensation*, in Opposition to *Moses's Law*; or, as it is expressly declared to produce actual Obedience to God, and all *Morality*, as the End of it. And this, again, is perfectly agreeable to all that we know of the Nature of God, either from Reason or Revelation; Both which represent Him as just, and a Punisher of dishonest Men, let their *Faith* be never so right; but never as a *Punisher* of the *honest* and *upright*. St. Paul, in a very particular Manner, (*Rom. ii.*) declares that future *Rewards* and *Punishments* will be adjudged to the *Morality* and *Immorality* only, of *Those*, who are without a *Revelation*, as well as of *Those* who enjoy One.

This does not at all depreciate the high Value of *Faith* in *Christ*; or of Any of *his own Institutions*. On the contrary, Nothing can be more for their Honour, than to find that the most noble End, and the most worthy of God, is the very End of that *Faith*, and of those *Institutions*. And, I fear, whoever depreciates *Morality*, and would represent to the World any other *End of Christianity*, as high-
 er

er than *This*, and not subservient to it; or, SERM. VI.
 whoever would magnify Any *inward* Accomplishment, or *Outward* Christian Institution, before this, and as an *End* superior to it, will be, upon Examination, found to rob that *Divine Religion* of One of it's brightest Ornaments; and of One of the noblest Arguments it can boast: and an Argument, without which, not *Miracles* themselves can, perhaps, be found sufficient to recommend it, with Success, to any Persons of *Virtue*, and good Sense. Nay, these Acts of the Mind, and Outward Performances, receive their Value from the good Disposition, or *Morality*, of the *Mind*; and are, properly speaking, subservient to *Morality* in *Practice*, through the Man's Life: but *Morality* can in no Sense be said to be subservient to *Them*, as a superior *End*; because it would have been the same unalterable good Thing, whether *They* had ever been required, or not. In a word; when We speak of the *End*, We mean the *bighest End* of the *Gospel*. And that is the highest *End* of the *Whole*, to the procuring or Improvement of which, every *inward* Act of the Mind, and every *outward* Institution, belonging to it, are made and declared to be subservient. And This, to the Glory of the *Gospel* be it said, is the *Practice* of all *Morality*.

SERM. VI. But to proceed ; Since this solemn *Judgment to come* is so expressly declared by our *Saviour*, and preached by his *Apostles*, as the great *Motive to Righteousness, Temperance, and every other Virtue*; Let us now observe

III. Of how great Use the Consideration of This, may and ought to be, to such Creatures as We are, placed in such a World as this.

St. *Paul's Discourse to Felix*, about the unalterable Obligations to *Morality*, might have been entertained as a good and reasonable Lecture: But it was the *Addition* of this other *Topic*, of a *Day* coming, in which All Men were to be called to *Account*; and to be rewarded, or punished, by the supreme Judge; which made the Impression upon Him, here mentioned; and forced him to betray the *inward* Apprehensions of a *Guilty Conscience*. We find, indeed, that it went no farther, than his *present* Concern and Uneasiness. He put off the *Discourse*; and, without doubt, the *Thoughts* of it too. The World had taken such hold of Him, that his Attention presently returned to the Profits and Pleasures of it; and would not suffer Him to give this Subject such a Place in his Thoughts, as the Importance of the Matter required. But let not Us follow such an Example,

This awful Subject of a *Judgment to come*, SERM. VI.
 is not, I own, much worthy of our Regard, unless the Expectation of the Thing itself be a reasonable and manly Expectation. But let not any one put the Thoughts of it far from Him, as if This were the Case. Let Him look into his own Mind, and it will shew Him, in the strongest Light, That a *Being* made capable of giving an Account, may justly be called to do it: That a *Being* framed so as to see *Duty*, and *Honour*, in one Method; and *Sin* and *Dishonour*, in another; and plainly designed for *Duty* to a God above Him, and a World of *Fellow-Creatures* around Him; has the greatest Reason to expect to have that Account of his Behaviour, demanded of Him, in *Another* Place, which is never demanded of him, in *This*. These are the Thoughts of a Man, as a reasonable and social Creature: and it is agreeable to the *Dignity* of a Man, and of the highest of Men, to entertain Himself with the Reflexions becoming his Nature, and resulting from the peculiar Excellencies of it. And to these great and unextinguishable Evidences of it, furnished from within the Circle of every Man's own Breast, the *Gospel* has added the Weight of that Assurance which *Christ* has given Us of such a *Judgment to come*.

SERM. VI. Neither let any fly from this Employment, as from a Scene of *Melancholy* and *Distress*, producing only Terror and Uneasiness. The End of this great and awful *Motive*, proposed by *natural* Religion, and heightened by *Reveled*, is not, to make Men *tremble*, but to make Men *better*; not to fill their Souls with *Horror*, but to lead them to the very contrary, by guarding them most effectually against those *Practices* which rob them of their Innocence and their Peace. And could Men be prevailed upon to think of it, as becomes them, I am persuaded, it would make even all the *Goods* of this World more agreeable to them. It would not destroy any *Profit*, *Pleasure*, or *Honour*, which a reasonable Creature would not wish to have destroyed. To all others it would add a Lustre and a Value. To *Riches* it would give the true and proper Use; which is their only Advantage. The *Honours* of this World it would adorn, by setting them off with all those *Virtues*, which alone can render them amiable in the Eyes of Beholders; and without which they are, at best, but gaudy Pageantry. And the *Pleasures* of Sense themselves would be rendered more sincere, unmixed, and lasting, by being restrained from hurting either the *Health*, or *Reputation*, or *Interest*, or *Honour*, of the Pursuer; and by
being


being deprived of that Sting of Guilt, which SERM. otherwise will for ever attend upon them. VI.

In such a World as ours is; with such a Nature as Man must be content with; surrounded with the *Temptations* of *Prosperity*, and the *Trials* of *Adversity*; Who would not wish to be under the Influence of a *Motive*, which may preserve the Dignity of his Nature, at the same Time that it guards and increases his Virtue. In every Age of our rational Life, and every Circumstance of it, We more and more, as We pass, want the friendly Assistance of such a Motive. The *Innocence* of *Childhood* quickly vanishes, and is succeeded by the *Voluptuousness* of *Youth*: and in *This*, a Torrent of uncontrolled *Passions* often threatens to carry all that is good before it. In the more advanced Years of Life, the Pursuits of *Ambition* or *Lust* of *Power* and *Advancement*, take place; not without Danger of the Man's changing Truth, Sincerity, and Honesty, for Art, Diffimulation, and Deceit. And in *Old Age*, the *Power* of *Avarice* often shews itself in too absurd a Manner to be described. This is the general State of Man. And therefore, Every Man may justly be said to have so much need of such a Motive to fortify Him, that he will, too probably, fail without it.

But

SERM.

VI. But They who are, by their Situation in Life, surrounded with more *Temptations*, and *Opportunities* than *Others*, have, of all Men, the greatest Necessity for such a Guard and Defense: Or, in other Words, They who have most Temptations to *forget* the great Day of *Accounts*, have, of all others, the strongest *Reasons* not to do it. Those who see little around them, besides the Hoards of Wealth, or the Gaieties of Power and Prosperity; whose *Stations* raise them above the common Level, and put them out of the way of many of the moral Advantages Others may meet with; whose Riches and Power invite the *Smoothness* of *Flattery*, but check the *Freedoms* of true *Friendship*; and whose exalted Degree of Life removes them from the lesser *Fears* or *Motives* which sometimes weigh with others: What remains for *These*, who lye most open to the strongest *Trials* of this Life, those of Prosperity, and Pleasure; of Profit, or Superiority; but to be alarmed into a Behaviour quite different from that of *Felix*, now before Us? Not to content themselves with hearing These Truths, and feeling a little present Commotion of Soul upon them; not to throw off the Consideration from the *present* certain Time, to an *uncertain* Futurity; but to enter seriously into their own Breasts; to think in earnest

nest of a Being superior to Themselves as SERM.
 much in Power, as in all other Perfections: VI.
 and particularly to represent to themselves 
 that Solemn *judgment* to come, in which They
 have an equal Concern with the Meanest of
 all their Fellow-Creatures; and in which they
 must appear as free from all Distinction of
 Superiority, as the lowest of Mankind. The
 Strength, or Multitude, of the Temptations
 which have here surrounded Them, will then
 increase the Glory and Crown of their *Virtue*;
 but not take away the Guilt of the *Contrary*,
 in the Eyes of *Him*, who will judge all Men
 according to their Works.

In a word; If the Men in *high Stations* of
 every Sort; and the most involved in the
 Affairs or Pleasures of Life, would but, now
 and then, find or force an Interval; wearied,
 as they must sometimes be, with the Hurry
 of Business, or tired with the Circle of A-
 musements; if They would, I say, now and
 then retire from all these; and think seriously
 of the Dignity and End of their Beings, and
 of their appearing in Judgment before that
 GOD whom They can neither deceive
 nor resist; This would teach *Them* to
 despise every Instance of *Power*, *Profit*, or
Pleasure, inconsistent with Duty and *Mora-*
lity. This would give eternal Peace to their
 OWN

124 *St. PAUL'S Discourse to FELIX.*

SERM. own Minds; and make their *Example* a Light,
VI. and an Incitement, to All below; who are
ever looking up to *Them*, and forming their
Manners on the *Model* of Those above them.
And thus might *Virtue*, by degrees, spread
itself through the *Inferior World*; and the
Number be increased of Such as may be *Hap-
py* both here and hereafter.

Of CONSISTENCY in all our ARGUMENTS about RELIGION.

S E R M O N VII.

Preached before the KING, March 5,
1731-2.

GALATIANS ii. ver. 18.

For if I build again the Things which I destroyed, I make myself a Transgressor.

IN the Verses going before this, we have a SERM. VII. very remarkable Instance of St. Peter's Misconduct, in contradicting, by Doctrine as well as Practice, what He himself had taught to be the *Design* of the *Gospel*; to the great Prejudice of it amongst the *Gentiles*; and this, out of *Fear* of some *Zelots* amongst the *Jews*: as appears evidently from St. Paul's *Reproof*, when He said to him, before all, (ver. 14.) *If Thou, being a Jew, livest after the Manner of the Gentiles, and*
not

SERMON. *not as do the Jews, [i. e. without a Regard to*
 VII. *the ceremonial Parts of the Jewish Law] why*
 ~~~~~ *compellest Thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*  
 or, *Why do you teach and lead Them to the*  
*Observance of what you do not observe yourself?*  
 A Behaviour! which one would be almost  
 tempted to think to have been, by the Design  
 of Providence, recorded, that it might stand as  
 a perpetual Warning and Monument against  
 founding any Pretences to *Infallibility* upon  
 a Succession to *this Apostle* in particular. St.  
*Paul*, who records it, after shewing the  
*Inconsistency* of this Conduct with the Rule by  
 which St. *Peter* had walked before, and by  
 which the *Gospel* had been propagated, goes on  
 farther to shew the Christian People, ver. 15,  
 16, 17. that the *Gospel* is not to be censured,  
 as a deficient Dispensation, not able to put us,  
 out of the State of Sinners, into a State of Fa-  
 vour with GOD; but *They* only, who either  
 teach, or receive, such Doctrines, as are *incon-*  
*sistent* with those *Principles*, upon which They  
 themselves first received the *Gospel*.

He then, in the *Text*, lays down this gene-  
 ral Rule, by a common Figure putting Him-  
 self for any other Person, *For if I build again*  
*the Things I have destroyed, I make myself a*  
*Transgressor: that is, For whosoever doth, by*  
*his Doctrine, contradict those First Principles*  
 upon

upon which his *Religion* is founded; and, to SERM. get rid of a present Difficulty, again maintains VII. or receives those *Doctrines*, upon the renouncing of which his Title to the Privileges of his Religion depends; *makes Himself a Transgressor*; that is, puts Himself back into the Condition of an *Unbeliever*, and *Sinner*, not entitled to God's Favour offered by his Religion; and so hurts the Religion He professes, by a Behaviour absolutely inconsistent with it. And what the *Apostle* affirms here of Those who *build again what they have once destroyed*, may, with an exact Agreeableness to St. Paul's Intention, be affirmed of Those also, who *destroy*, or pull to pieces, *that which they had before built up*, as necessary to the Support of their Religion: because there is exactly the same Reason for it; and because what may be called *building up*, with respect to *False Principles*, may be as justly expressed by the *destroying*, or pulling down, those *Good* ones which are contrary to them.

This being the *General Reasoning* made use of by St. Paul, in the earliest Days, to oppose the Mischiefs done to the *Gospel*, by the inconsistent Behaviour of first supporting it, and inviting the *Gentiles* into it, by particular *Principles*, and then, as seeming Difficulties pressed, declaring against those very *Principles*;

SERM. *Principles*; and the reasoning being at first  
 VII. unanswerable, and in all Ages the same; it  
 will be natural to apply it to our own Use,  
 by observing, That the *Arguments* which alone  
 can successfully defend, or recommend, *Christianity*,  
 must be *consistent*, and uniformly  
 maintained: That whosoever *builds up*, or  
 maintains again, those same *Principles* by the  
 Destruction, or Confutation, of which alone  
*Christianity* itself was at first, and ever must  
 be, defended against its Opposers; and that  
 Whosoever *destroys*, and throws off those *Prin-*  
*ciples*, upon which alone *Christianity* could be  
 first *built*, and supported; *makes Himself a*  
*Transgressor*; greatly hurts the Cause of *Chris-*  
*tianity*, and furnishes the Adversaries of it  
 with the most Popular, and, according to the  
 Genius of the World, the most successful, Pre-  
 tentes against it.

And as *St. Paul* thought it of great Importance  
 to address His Discourse, and his Cau-  
 tions, against such *Inconsistencies*, to the *Chris-*  
*tian People*, not without some hurt to *St. Pe-*  
*ter's* Character, for fear They should either  
 receive such *Inconsistencies* as would vitiate  
 their own Title to the *Privileges* of true *Chris-*  
*tians*, or come to reject the *Gospel* itself, for  
 the Sake of them: so, I hope, I shall be excus-  
 ed, if I follow so great an Example, and lay

before a Congregation of *Christians*, the same SERM.  
 General Rule, and the same *Cautions*, equally VI.  
 necessary now, as in His Days, to preserve  
 Them from being nominal Believers in vain; or  
 from rejecting *Christianity* entirely.

You see plainly, by this Time, that my Aim is, To bring that same Rule, of *Consistency*, into, the Service of *Christianity* in *this* Age, which the *Apostle* made use of, in the *first* Age of the *Gospel*; and to shew the great Disadvantage arising to *Christianity*, from swerving at any Time from it.


The *Débates* which have long been, and still are, subsisting, both in the *Popish*, and *Protestant*, World, give us Occasion enough for this Lesson. If a judgment were to be made from the Tenor of some of them, one would be apt to imagine an open War declared between *Reason*, and *Revelation*; an irreconcilable Enmity between the *Religion of Nature*, and the *Religion of Grace*, or *Favour*, proposed in the *Gospel*. I hope, for the Sake of *Christianity* itself, that this neither is now, nor ever will be, the Case. For if such a *real Contradiction* should once be granted; it is very evident, Which of the two must suffer. But, to come to what I chiefly design,

I. The *first Observation* I shall make, is, That when *Christianity* is recommended to any *Unbe-*

SERM. *lievers*, either as it lies in the *Gospel* itself, or as

VII. it is modified in any particular *Church of Christ*,  
 the *Arguments* are, and must be, all built upon the *Right*, and *Duty*, of all Men to enter into an impartial *Examination* of their former Opinions. The *Appeal* is made to their common *Reason*. They are called upon to try, by the Rules of That alone, what is proposed to them, as from GOD, before they judge or determine about it. This very *Appeal* supposes the *Law of Reason*, that is, the *Religion of Nature*, to subsist before-hand, as the Measure of their trying whatever is offered to Them, as a *Revelation* from Heaven. It supposes the *invisible Things* of God; not only his *Being*, but his *Attributes* and *Perfections*, to be already *seen*, from the *Things that are made*; and from their Relations to one another; and particularly, from the moral Capacities and Powers of Man, evidently made accountable to His great *Creator*.

And there can be no other Method than This. For how can I possibly judge, whether any *Proposition*, or *Injunction*, be worthy of GOD, unless I first know the Nature and Perfections of that GOD, about whose Dispen-sations I am called upon to judge? And how can I possibly judge whether the *Proposal* offered be agreeable to his Original Law, the *Religion*

*ligion of Nature*, by which I am called upon SERM.  
 to judge; unless there be such a *Law* existing, VII.  
 either actually known to me, or within the   
 Reach of my Capacity, *before* I form my  
 Judgment about what is proposed to me?

This being so, it is evident that when Men are first invited into *Christianity*, it is not by the way of *Imposition* upon their *Faculties*, or *Senses*; nor by depreciating, or throwing Contempt upon, their *Reasoning* Capacity; but by acknowledging the Usefulness of *Reason*, and the Excellence of the *Religion of Nature*. They are then told, that it is their Duty to *judge* of the Demands made upon them, in the Name of GOD; and that they can and ought to do this, by applying Themselves to their natural Light, with an honest Heart; and by comparing what is now proposed with that *Light*, which the same GOD has already given them, before they can be assured that Nothing is now required of them, but what is agreeable to their former Law: and All, We see, is to be built at first, not upon the Ruines, but upon the Evidence and Support, of *Reason*.

If any *Unbeliever*, in such a Situation, should answer to this Proposal, when first made to Him, that he dared not trust Himself in so important a Case: That the *reasoning* Ca-

SERM. capacity in Man was too weak, to judge of  
 VII. the Ways of the great GOD; that the *Light*  
 He had to see by, in this Case, was so dim,  
 that He could not presume, without forfeit-  
 ing all Title to Humility, to determine a Mat-  
 ter of such infinite Importance by it; and  
 therefore, thought it more becoming Him to  
 rest Himself where Providence had once lodg-  
 ed Him, rather than to enter into Searches, out  
 of which his poor, weak *Reason*, would hardly  
 bring Him sound and whole: If any One, I  
 say, upon the first Proposal of *Christianity* to  
 Him, should answer in this Manner; I doubt  
 not, he would be told that this was only the  
 Refuge of a lazy, unactive, or wicked Mind;  
 that the eternal Law of *Reason* and of GOD,  
 was not so obscure, or remote, as Vice and  
 Indolence would fain represent it to be; that  
 his *reasoning Capacity*, let it be what it will,  
 was the only Measure of his judging for which  
 He can be accountable; that GOD has a  
 Right to call upon Him to make use of it,  
 as the *Rule* of his Judgment, concerning all  
 Pretensions of this Kind.

Thus evidently does it appear that Men are  
 not, and could not be, invited into *Christianity*,  
 but by a professed *Homage* paid first to the *Reli-*  
*gion of Nature*, as to a *Superior Judge*, of GOD's  
 Appointment, by whose Sentence the *Religion*  
 of




of *Grace* (or *Favour*) is to stand or fall: and that the whole Weight of the *Latter*, lies upon the acknowledged Strength of the *Former*. The *Agents* of the *Church of Rome* themselves, who *compass Sea and Land* to gain a Profelyte, even *They* are forced to speak to Men, at their *first* Application to Them, in this same Manner; and to make some Complements to the *Reason* of Mankind, as to the proper Judge of the *First Step* necessary to their Success. Thus much for the *first Observation* I had to offer.

II. The *second* will relate to the *Procedure* which too often is seen to follow this *Beginning*; but is quite *inconsistent* with it; and therefore, hurtful to the Cause of *Christianity* itself. I will give only an Instance, or *Two*, of what I mean: but these sufficient to shew of what Importance it is, to be perfectly *consistent* in what We say upon so interesting a Subject, as *Religion*.

1. If any of *Those Persons*, to whom the *Christian Religion* is, in the Manner before said, recommended, should take Occasion, from the Excellency of Reason, and of the *Religion* of *Nature*, thus appealed to, as the Rule of Judgment, to argue against the *Probability*, or even the *Possibility*, of the *Christian Revelation*, upon this Ground, that, there being already so good a *Law* open to Men, there

SERM. can be no *Necessity* for such a *Revelation*. Supposing this, I say, (which has been the Case) can it possibly be *consistent* with what was proposed to these Persons before; nay, must it not hurt the *Cause*, designed to be served, for Them immediately to be told, as They sometimes are, that *Human Reason* is very *weak*, at best; that the *Law of Nature*, or the *Religion of Nature*, is imperfect and insufficient; or *obscure*, and not within the Reach of our Understandings; and therefore, a *Revelation* was *absolutely necessary* to the Direction and Salvation of Mankind? For, How quick and natural will the Reply to this be? Why then have you appealed to this same *Reason*, and this same *Religion of Nature*; and demanded of Us to judge from *These*, whether *Christianity* be worthy of God?

*Human Reason*, or the Capacity of a Man, be it what you please, is all the Light that Man has to judge by, concerning the Nature and Attributes of the *Great God*. By this *Reason*, weak as it is; weak as it can be painted out even since the Fall, We are required by You to judge of the *Gospel* itself, by comparing it with the prime *Law* of our *Creator*, and with His known *Attributes*. But if we are too weak either to find out *That Law*; or if *That Law*, when found out, is no *Law* for


for Us to judge by; but either a dim, or a SERM. deceitful Light; either not sufficient to shew VII. Us Good, or leading Us (as some *Lights* do ) *Travellers,*) out of our Way: If this be the Case; We are brought back again, where we set out; and, if This be the State of *Human Reason,* with regard to That *Original Law,* and the *Attributes* of GOD, from which it must be deduced; We have Nothing to judge by, with respect either to the *Truth,* or *Expediency,* of the *Gospel-Revelation.* And how such a *Reply* can be well answered, I do not plainly see.

This is enough to shew, that the Cause of *Christianity* itself may be unwarily hurt by our thus *pulling down* what We once *built up*; or *building up* what we once *pulled down*; in our *Arguments* relating to it.

If any ask after *another Answer* to this Difficulty, and one quite *consistent* with the Appeal made to *Reason,* or *natural Religion,* as to a previous *Law,* perfect enough to be the *Touch-stone* of all *Revelation*; I hope, such an One may be easily pointed out. For, supposing the *Perfection* of this Primary Law of GOD; and granting the Plainness and Clearness of it to all attentive and well-disposed Minds; and also, That a *Revelation* is *not* absolutely necessary; I think it may be, with

SERM. the strictest Truth and *Consistency*, answered,  
 VII. That, agreeably to all the Notions of Almighty God, taught by Reason and natural Religion, it is in all respects worthy of that supreme Governour, to do for the Happiness of such Creatures as He has made us, not only all that is *absolutely necessary*, but what may be *excellently useful* to that End: That He may, with Glory to Himself, display his paternal Regard for Us, by doing much *more* than what is *strictly necessary* for our Eternal Good: That it is *Love*, and not the *Rigour* of Obligation, which is represented in the *Gospel*, as the Moving *Principle* of his sending *Christ* into the World; and that this *Love* is a *Principle*, which leads to greater and more Instances of *Benevolence* towards his Creatures, than what can be thought in *Justice* due, on his Part.

This may be illustrated by observing, That a *Father* amongst Men, would be accounted but a very indifferent *Friend* to his *Child*, who, because his Son might possibly find out the Ways of Prudence and Safety, by a constant Attendance to the *Light*, he Himself could strike out, should, upon this Account, refuse to advise him, from his own *Experience*; or so much as to awaken him to a Sense of any Danger, in his Entrance into the World: That, as it would not be esteemed an useleſs


or weak Thing for a *Father* to do more than S E R M. can be called *necessary*; but, on the contrary, VII. a Mark of *Indolence*, or *Ill-nature*, not to do  it in many Cases; so it cannot be thought in Almighty GOD a *Conduct*, either fruitless or unreasonable, but accompanied with the greatest *Propriety* and *Glory*, to do more for his Creatures than He is *strictly* obliged to do, in order to put Them into the True Way to all Good.

Thus may it be proved to be worthy of the *Supreme* Governour, to consult their Happiness, by calling upon them, in an *extraordinary* Manner, to forsake that *Vice* and *Idolatry*, which they might, without such an *Interposition*, see to be contrary to *Reason*; and to practise that whole System of *Morality*, the *Obligation* of which, it is granted, They *might possibly*, without this, find out to be their Duty. Nay, It may be added, that, considering the Importance of the *Religion* of *Nature*, and the willful *Negligence* and *Corruption* of the Bulk of Mankind, it was very *probable, à priori*, that a *Good* GOD would once at least, interpose to awaken his reasonable Creatures, by some extraordinary Method, to the Study and Practice of *That Religion*. And surely, it must be acknowledged that the *Gospel*, if We consider it seriously, proposes what is at least most *useful* to Mankind, by making *this* very *Religion* of *Nature*

SERM. Nature a main Part of what it requires; and  
 VII. by revealing plainly the Motive of a *Judg-*  
 ~~~~~ *ment to come*, in order to secure all Obedience  
 to it.

This, I think, must be allowed to be a satisfactory Way of treating the *Difficulty* before-mentioned; and particularly on this Account, that it is a Way perfectly *consistent* with all our *Appeals* to natural *Religion*, and all that can justly be said of the Excellency of it; and therefore, a *Way* which preserves to Reason all its Weight, and to *Revelation* all the *Dignity* it claims.

2. I will now mention a *second* Instance of a very *inconsistent* Conduct with regard to the *Christian* Revelation. When an honest Man, moved to the *Enquiry* into it, by the *Appeal* made to the sufficient *Strength*, not to the *Weakness* of *Human Reason*; called to it by the *Trust* reposed in Him by God, of looking after his own Soul, and his own Happiness; encouraged to it, by his acknowledged Capacity to find out and judge of the *Attributes* of the Great God, and his *Right* to reject all *Doctrines* about them, but what are agreeable to the Dictates of *natural Religion*: *When*, thus invited and encouraged, a Man with an honest Mind, compares the Contents of the *Gospel*, as preached by *Christ* himself, and Those immediate Disciples whom He called
 to

to do it, with the immutable *Law* of Nature, S E R M.
 and the invisible Things of GOD ; and is just- V I I.
 ly come to this *Conclusion*, that the *Gospel* is 
 worthy of GOD, and accompanied with suffi-
 cient Evidence : *When*, after He is come thus
 far, to his Satisfaction, He thinks himself still
 to have the same Right to consider, and judge
 of, the Meaning and Extent of the *Proposi-*
tions and *Precepts*, recommended in the *New*
Testament, or taught by Those who profess to
 preach nothing else, by the same Rule of Reason,
 and GOD's first Law : how surprizing must it
 be to Him, to be stopt, and told, that, having
 come to this good Resolution, and entered
 Himself into the *Church*, or Society of *Christi-*
ans, it is now Time to acquaint Him, that, af-
 ter his embracing the *Christian Religion*, there
 will be very little need of his troubling him-
 self in that Manner : That He has been called
 upon, indeed, as a Person entrusted with the
 Care of his own Soul ; but that He is now to
 be eased of that Trouble, and to devolve it up-
 on *Others* : that He has been treated as a Per-
 son endowed with Understanding, and requir-
 ed to embrace *Christianity*, as far only as
 his own Understanding should perceive and
 find every thing in it worthy of GOD transact-
 ing with Man : but that now he must lay
 aside this Character of an *Understanding* Being,
 and

SERM. and must not think it hard to embrace what is
 VII. dictated by Others, though quite unintelligible
 to Himself; or, which is worse, absolutely in-
 consistent with all his own well-founded Notions
 of GOD, and of his Duty? How surprizing,
 I say, must this be? And yet, as *surprizing*
 as This is, it is the open avowed Language of
 the whole Church of *Rome*; and, I fear, the un-
 avoidable *Consequence* of what *Some*, who have
 departed far from that *Church*, unwarily teach
 and inculcate.

But is not This again, *destroying what we
 have built up*; and, in another View, *building up
 again what we have destroyed*? And, what is
 most to be lamented, with Men who have not
 Strength of Mind enough to get out of these
 Difficulties, and yet Understanding enough to
 see them; the Damage falls upon the *Gospel*
 itself. With all others the *Case* is plain, and
 the *Answer* easy. If We are fit to be trusted
 with our own Souls, and we are justly called
 upon, as a Duty owing to *them*, to judge of
 what is proposed to Us, as from GOD; We are
 as fit still to judge of the Nature and Extent of
 our Duty, as we are still as much obliged to take
 Care of Ourselves, and of our own Happiness.
 If We had no Capacity to understand any *Pro-
 positions* expressed in Words; we could never be
 called upon by a Righteous GOD to judge of
 them

them in order to receive them. If the *whole* were unintelligible to Us; it would be of no more Concern to us, than if the *Form of Words*, pretending to convey it to Us, were only a Crowd of inarticulate Sounds; and We, no more interested in it, than if we were of the Herd of *Animals*, uncapable of Reason. And, by the same just Rule, if any *Part* of what is proposed to Us, be utterly unintelligible to Us, *that Part* is just as much out of our Sphere, and equally of no Concern or Influence, with Regard to Us: and We ought not, if this be the Case, to be called upon to judge at all in so important a Matter. As therefore, in all other *Sciences*, truly so called, amidst all the most intricate Difficulties and Differences, it is expected that the *Words*, on each Side, should have a Meaning to them, and be understood, without which, no Use could be made of them: So, much more, in *Religion*, which is a *Science* of infinite Use to our Practice, nothing can have Influence, that is not known; and nothing can be made known to Us, that is not expressed in Words, which are intelligible to Ourselves; and therefore, to be judged of by Ourselves.

And if we go from Speculations, and Principles, to *Precepts*, no one can deny but that the true Meaning, the exact Bounds, the Nature



SERM. VII. *ture and Extent, of the Figurative, or General Expressions, in which almost all Duties are laid down in the New Testament, cannot possibly be fixed, but by the Attributes of God, and the Law of Reason and Society; which is the Religion of Nature. And this Religion, neither our Saviour, nor His Apostles, ever professed completely and explicitly to delineate, in all its Parts and Measures; but They constantly appealed to it, and invited the World to regard and practise it. On the contrary; if this be so, that, in embracing the Christian Religion, we must discard that Reason, by which alone we were led to embrace it; and if that Understanding, which we were told was sufficient to judge of the Relation between the Attributes and First Law of GOD, and the Revelation of the Gospel, is now in some Parts of Religion, to act no more the Part of a Director to Us: May it not be said, too justly, that this Procedure is no better than leading Us by the Brightness of Light, into the Blackness of Darkness; and a Method of making our Understanding itself the Instrument of guiding Us to a State of no Understanding? Nay, Will it not from hence be urged farther, by Some, that They have been imposed upon in the whole Proceeding; and ought to go back to that Point, at which They began, when They*

They were first *invited*, and (if I may use the SERM. Expression) *enticed*, into *Christianity*, by the VII. *Complements* then paid to the *Religion of Nature*, as the *Original Light* constituted by GOD for us to judge by, of all possible Schemes of Religion.

I have not Time to name more *Instances* of the same Sort. But these *Two* are sufficient to shew the just Ground I had to observe that *Christianity* itself must suffer by the *Inconsistencies* of Those, who, in their Arguings about it, do thus *build up again what they had destroyed, or destroy what They had built up.*


I will now conclude with a few *Remarks*, which plainly follow from what I have said.

1. They who inadvertently treat *Reason*, and the *Religion of Nature*, in the Manner I have now described, if We go on to speak in *St. Paul's Figure* of a *Building*, seem to have totally forgot the Beginning and Progress of the *Work*, in this whole *Fabrick* of Religion. They treat the *Law of Reason*, as if it were only the *Scaffolding* of the *Building*; and, like the *Scaffolding* of *Other Buildings*, to be taken away with the *Rubbish*, at the *End* of the *Work*. Whereas, it is the very and only *Foundation*, upon which They themselves are forced, and glad, to raise the *Building* at first. And, like *other Foundations*, so absolutely necessary to the standing, as well as to the first erecting, of it, that

if

SERM. if you take *this* away, the *Building* itself must
 VII. fall. It may *seem* to *Themselves*, indeed, to
 remain; and They may please themselves with
 the Thoughts of living still in the *upper Rooms*:
 But it is from that Moment a *Fiction* only;
 the *Fiction* of *Fancy*, and a mere *Castle in the*
Air. The *Rain* need not descend, nor the
Floods come, nor the *Winds* blow and beat up-
 on this, to weaken and destroy it, like the
foolish Man's House in the *Gospel*, built upon
 the *Sand*: for, upon taking away the Foun-
 dation, This must of itself immediately fall;
 not having so much as *Sand* to support it.

2. As the *Law* of Reason, even in fallen
 sinful Man, is GOD'S *original Law*, to the
 Test of which *Revelation* is, of Necessity,
 submitted: Methinks, there ought to be, in
 all Persons concerned, the *greatest Fear* of of-
 fending GOD, by depreciating *This*, which may
 most justly be called His Primary Revelation of
 his Will, under the *Pretense* of a more than
 ordinary *Zeal* for any *Secondary Law* of his,
 which cannot be received, or so much as known,
 without *This*. And this Fear must be the
 more reasonable in a *Christian*, if it be con-
 sidered, That whoever attempts, (let his
 Design be never so honest and pious,) to ex-
 tinguish, or diminish, the Splendor of GOD'S
Original Light; if He could succeed, may
 be

be sure of *darkening* the *Second Light*, which SERM.
 He thinks to set up on high, and make bright- VII.
 er: because the *Light of Nature* is the 
Light of the Gospel also, as it shews Men the
 Way to it; and as it throws its Beams upon
 every *Page* of it. And I will here add, what
 seems too often to be forgot, that the *Religion*
 of *Nature* is not the *Opinion*, or *Whimsy*, of this
 or that *Philosopher*; no, nor what any, or all
 of them put together, have *actually* said, or may
 say: but it is truly that Law of GOD, which
 may justly be collected, by His reasonable Crea-
 tures, from the immutable *Reasons*, and *Rela-*
tions of Things; and is the *same Law*, as one
 of the Heathen Writers well observes, at *Rome*
 and at *Athens*; that is, in other Words, at *all*
Places, from *one End* of the World to the *other*.

3. Though it appears from what has been
 said, that the bad Consequence of such *inconsis-*
tent Methods, is, or may probably be, the
turning away of Many from the *Faith* of *Christ*;
 yet, it is fit that such Persons should know, that
 This Fault in *Others*, will not wholly excuse
Them; because They may see, if They please,
 that This cannot be charged upon the *Gospel*
 itself, but only upon the Weakness, or Wick-
 edness, of Frail Men. On the other hand,
 how great the Guilt is of Those who lay any
Stumbling-Blocks in the Way of *Christianity*;

S E R M. let our *Saviour* himself teach us. *Wo unto the*
 VII. *World, because of Offenses. For it must needs*
 be that *Offenses* come: that is, The Nature of
 Man is such, that *Stumbling-Blocks* will be
 laid in the *Way* of the *Gospel*. But *Wo unto*
that Man, by whom They come. And this *Wo*
 is more particularly described by our Lord,
 in a Manner, pathetic enough to awaken all
 Persons concerned, to put a strong Guard upon
 their own *Zeal*, or their own *Passions*; lest They
 should, even under the Influence of a well-
 meaning Heart, at any Time fall into this Con-
 demnation.

4. As the *Religion of Nature* is supposed to
 be a sufficient *Rule*, and in a sufficient Measure
 within our Reach, when we are called upon, as
 a Duty, to examine into *Christianity* by it; it
 evidently follows, that Whosoever takes most
 Pains, and most successfully, to delineate the
Religion of Nature, in all it's Branches, and
 all it's Extent, is so far from being an *Enemy*
 to the *Gospel*, in the Event; that He really is
 the *Man*, who does what the *Gospel* came to
 awaken the *World* to do; and what is necessa-
 ry towards the explaining and settling the *moral*
Duties mentioned in it: and furnishes out a
System, which, if it be founded upon *Truth* and
Reason, becomes immediately a Part, an essen-
 tial, certain, and indisputable Part, of the *Gos-*
pel

pel itself; being *That Part*, upon which the *great Account* to come is so often there represented chiefly to turn.

SERM.
VII.


There can be no greater Service done to *Christianity* itself, than what arises from such Labours of Wise and Serious Men. And it is with a View to the same Service, that I have, at this Time, used my best Endeavours that the *Religion of Favour and Mercy* may not suffer by any Disgraces unwarily put upon the *Religion of Nature*. In a word; if We have a real Regard and Concern for *Christianity*, let us shew it by the Value we set upon that *Religion of Nature*, by which alone we could be rightly conducted to it; and without which We cannot interpret, or understand, any of it's Doctrines and Precepts, when We have received it: Nay, which is now incorporated into it, and itself made the *Law of Christ*. Let us not encourage, or receive, Any one *inconsistent Method* of treating the *Christian Religion*: For such *Inconsistency* is, in Truth, the great Strength of *Infidelity*, on one hand; and, in some Cases, of *Popery*, on the other. But, let us act that *consistent Part* which alone can make *Christianity* sit easy upon a thinking Mind; or recommend it to the World of *Unbelievers*.

If we conscientiously do this; neither *building again* any Part of that System of Darkness

SER M. which We in effect *destroyed*, when We, upon
 VII. our own Conviction, embraced *Christianity*; nor
 ~~~~~ *destroying* the least Part of that System of *Reason*  
 and *Light*, which We may be said *then* to  
 have *built up*, as the Strength and Support of it:  
 And if We add to this that beautiful *Consistency*,  
 in the *Practice* of All that is good, which is the  
*Duty* and *Ornament* of a *Christian*; We shall,  
 by this whole Conduct, do the greatest Honour  
 and Service to the *Gospel*; and secure to ourselves  
 the *Happiness* attending such a Behaviour in *this*  
 Life, and the *Reward* promised to it, in That  
 which is to come.



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*No continuing City here, &c.*

## S E R M O N VIII.

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 23,*  
1734-5.

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HEBREWS xiii. 14.

*For here have We no continuing City; but We  
seek one to come.*

**T**HE Life of Man, in this World, is often represented, by the *Author* of this *Epistle*, and other sacred *Writers*, our the *Life* of a *Traveller*, a *Stranger*, or *Sas journeyer* here below: and this World itself, as the *Road* to another. And, in Truth, this is a very proper Representation of the *Case*. *Heaven*, that Seat of established Happiness above, is our *Home*; and ought to be so accounted by Us. Thither all our Steps ought to be tending: and through this World must we go, as through a Road, before we come to it. In our Jour-

SERM. ney, We have all the Unhappineffes of *Travellers*.

VIII. We meet with an inconvenient Lodging, and ordinary Entertainment, for some Time. And if it be otherwise, yet we must certainly leave it; and no more think of settling ourselves in it, than a *Traveller* does of fixing his *Habitation* upon the most beautiful Spot of Earth he meets with in his Way; or in the best accommodated House upon his Road. The little *Rest* we have, if we have any, is, as in a *strange* Place, disturbed and interrupted with much Noise, and Hurry, and Disorder; and, like that of *Travellers*, to be left, perhaps, with the next Morning's Light; and ourselves to be called Home to a more fixt and durable State. *For here have We no continuing City: but We seek me to come.*

From this *Allusion* to the Life of a *Traveller*, y which the Uneasineffes of *our Life* in *this World*, are illustrated; and from the *Words* of the *Text*, particularly setting forth the Uncertain, and *Unsettled*, Condition of Man here below; it is my Design to take Occasion, without any critical Examination into their *Connexion* with the Words before and after them, to consider, more at large,

I. The *unhappy* Condition of Man in this uncertain State, where *he has no continuing City*; supposing

*No continuing City here, &c.*

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supposing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

S E R M.  
VIII.

II. The Grounds we have firmly to expect, and seek, such a State of Happiness, in *a continuing City to come*: And,

III. Lastly, the Importance, and true Use, of the foregoing Observations.

I. The *unhappy* Condition of Man in this uncertain State, in which *He has no continuing City*; supposing Him to be without the Hope of a better and happier State to come.

1. To be brought into the World (by the Will of a superior Being) weak and helpless; to pass our first Years in a State of absolute Dependence upon the imperfect Wisdom, or strong Passions, of Others; to be nourished, through *Infancy* and *Childhood*, with much Care and Trouble to Those about us, and much Uneasiness and Pain to ourselves; to be educated, through our *Youth*, and through all the Hazards and Storms of that impetuous Season, according to the good or bad, the just or mistaken, Notions of Those who claim the Right of conducting us to the *Gate*, at which we are to chuse our own Path, and at the Entrance of which *our own Life* properly begins — To enter upon this Life, now to be led under our own Conduct, perhaps big with the Thoughts of Nothing but the Enjoyment

SER M. of uninterrupted *Good*; and to find ourselves soon  
 VIII. surrounded by a Crowd of *Evils*: To go on, and  
 still be hoping for something satisfactory, and  
 still disappointed; Unhappy, by missing the Aim  
 in View; or more cursed, by obtaining it; either  
 not finding what we sought, or finding what ap-  
 peared *Happiness* at a Distance to be Emptiness,  
 or perhaps, *Bitterness* itself: — To inherit the  
*Pains*, and *Diseases*, of our *Forefathers*; or to suf-  
 fer under new ones of our own: To bend under  
*Afflictions* properly belonging to Ourselves; or to  
 partake sensibly in those of Others, in whose Hap-  
 piness our own is wrapt up; or at least, to sympa-  
 thize with our Fellow-creatures, in the many  
 Scenes of *Distress*, forcing themselves into our  
 View, on which Side soever we cast our Eyes:  
 And, after passing such an uncertain and tempest-  
 tuous Sea, in which one Wave is continually  
 pressing upon another; and one Danger attend-  
 ing to take the Place of another: *i. e.* after passing  
 a *short* Life of *Folly* and *Vanity*; of *Expecta-  
 tion* and *Disappointment*; of imperfect Health,  
 and uneasy Pain: After all this, I say to sink ir-  
 to Nothing; to fall into a State of utter Insensi-  
 bility: — The *Experience* of the *One*, and the  
*Prospect* of the *Other*, seem too great a Burthen  
 for a rational Creature to bear.

2. Nor are the Unhappinesses and Uncertainties  
 of human Life confined to any particular *Cli-  
 mates*


mates of the Earth, or Degrees of Men. Go to S E R M.  
those Parts, which are sometimes called *Happy*; VIII.  
where the Sun shines warm, and the Earth is  
always ready to pour forth its Abundance: and  
you will find, in the *Moral World*, little but  
*Violence*, and *Iniquity*, triumphant; in the *Pol-*  
*itical*, the *Oppression* of the Powerful, laying  
waste the Rights, and living upon the Spoils, of  
Those below them; and in the *Natural*, Dis-  
tress and Want spread over the most delightful  
Countries, through the *Sloth* and *Effeminacy* of  
their Inhabitants; or the *Violence* of Tempests  
and Earthquakes frequently scattering Terror and  
Ruine all around them. And if You return to  
those Parts where Power is made useful and  
lovely by Justice and Law: How often will you  
find them torn to pieces by intestine Quarrels; al-  
ways disturbing, and, sometimes, totally des-  
troying, the Peace and Security of private Life?

3. If we let our Thoughts go up to the more  
elevated Stations of Life; are *They* more securely  
fenced about from *Evils*, by Providence; or  
more defended from *Uncertainty* and *Unhap-*  
*piness* than Others? Is the Sleep of Those who  
possess them, sweeter, or less interrupted by anxi-  
ous Cares and Fears, than That of their Infe-  
riors? Or, are Diseases and Death kept farther  
and longer from *Them*, than from the Mean-  
est? Far otherwise. The Outside, indeed,  
is

SERM. is all dazzling and pompous: But *within*, are  
 VIII. the Cares, and Perplexities, and Unhappineſſes,  
 naturally attending ſuch Stations, either through  
 the Imperfections inſeparable from human Nature; or from the Envy and Diſatisfaction of Others. And were their Eſtate a thouſand Times more eligible; I might ſay, leſs pitiable, than it is—Nay, were *Power* nothing but *Happineſs* unmixed; were *Government*, Pleaſure without Pain; and the ſincere Cares of it always repaid with Duty and Gratitude: Were *Riches* the Inſtruments of *Good*, untainted by any Marks of *Miſery*; were *Grandeur* as gay *within*, as it is gaudy *without*: yet, have the Poſſeſſors no Security from Evils of another Sort, and *no continuing City here*. The Diſeaſes and common Calamities of Life are ſufficient, often, to make the whole *Scene* of all theſe united, *Inſipid*, or *Nauſeous*: and whether They do, or not; the *laſt Enemy* muſt come; and to *his* Force, by the Appointment of God, the beſt built Fabrick of human Happineſs muſt yield.

If This, therefore, be really the *unhappy* and *uncertain* Condition of Man in this World; and, from the higheſt to the loweſt, no One exempt from it; what does it become Us to do? Shall We ſtop here in this Diſtreſs, and place our only Happineſs in *Deſpair* of Any? Or ſhall we ſpend the Vigour of our Minds in unmanly

Com-

Complaints of our unhappy Portion; and lose SERM.  
Sight of all Happiness, because it will not at- VIII.  
tend Us, upon *this* tottering and uneven Stage? If   
we are wise, or know what it is to be made rea-  
sonable Creatures, in our Degree; Let us rather  
try, what was proposed in the next Place,

II. Whether this *Unhappiness* itself, in *this*  
State, will not guide our Thoughts to Happiness  
*hereafter*; and the Experience of *having no con-*  
*tinuing City here*, lead us to the reasonable Ex-  
pectation of *One to come*?

1. The *first Thought*, upon this Head, will  
arise from our being brought into Life, and placed  
in this World, by a *Superior Agent*, a GOD of all  
possible Perfections. If this Supreme Director be a  
Being, not only of all *Power*, but of all *Wisdom*  
and *Goodness*; not acting by arbitrary Will, but  
by the Maxims of unclouded Reason: Whate-  
ver Darkneses there may be, in our finite Un-  
derstandings, with regard to the Design of every  
Part of the Creation; yet, This must be certain  
if any thing in the whole Comprehension of Na-  
ture be certain, that Such a Being could not  
possibly command us into Existence, with such  
Faculties as We possess, with any Design sepa-  
rated from That *Godlike One*, of conduct-  
ing Us *finally to Happiness*; whatever *State* of  
*Trials* and *Uneasinesses*, He may *first* appoint  
Us

S E R M. Us to pass through. It is unworthy of such an  
 VIII. *Agent*, whose *Goodness* must give Counsel to his  
 ~~~~~ *Power*, to suppose that He could have had any  
Glory of his own in view, but what was perfectly consistent with a just Regard to the *Happiness* of such Beings, when He resolved to send Them into this World. The contrary Notion of the *Glory of God* is the Foundation of the worst Errors about his Dealings with his reasonable Creatures; and cloaths Him with *Power*, only to make Him their *Terror*, and not their *Delight*.

If God, therefore, who *then* brought us *first* into Being, *when we first* tasted of Life, and were free from all Possibility of wilful Offence on our Part, could be supposed to throw us into this State, in which so few have any Taste of Good, and so many are almost devoted to Pain and Misery; and, at the same Time, to open to our Thoughts no other Scene but This: might it not justly be said, that such a Proceeding as this, is no better than to force many kinds of Evil, and many Degrees of Misery, upon *Creatures* void of all *Offense*, without the least Hope or Pretense of so much as any Recompence for them? But if the *Greatest* Being in the Universe be the *Best*; as He certainly is; let us be afraid of imputing such a Conduct to Him; and, under that Fear, let us do Justice to his Attributes

in this Instance ; and, with Assurance, conclude S E R M.
that He would never have created intelligent V I I I.
Beings, only to sport a little, and suffer much, in
such a World as *This*: and, consequently, had
in his View Another and better State after *This*,
when he first commanded us hither.

2. Let us go one Step farther, and, if we may
be allowed to do it, let us suppose a Being crea-
ted with sufficient Degrees of Intelligence ;
and immediately placed, by his Creator, in
such a *Point of View*, as to be able to see
through all the Mazes of human Life, and sur-
vey all the Imperfections, and Miseries, and
Uncertainties, here below ; and to judge of them
just as well as *Experience* enables the most unpre-
judiced amongst Men, to do. Let us suppose,
after such a full View, it were left to his own
Option, whether He would be content to pass
through the same several Periods of Life which
the Inhabitants of this World do, and to take
the common Lot of Mankind here below, as his
whole Portion ; whether He would chuse this
certain Conflict with *Evils*, and small Chance
for any *Good* ; and, *after* the Conflict, be reduc-
ed to a State of *Insensibility* ; or to be thrown
back now *immediately* into his former State of
the same *Insensibility*. Were this the Case, I hard-
ly think that the bare Name of *Life*, which is but
an empty Sound when separated from all Hope
of

SERM. of settled Happiness; and much worse, when
 VIII. connected with a great deal of Misery; that the
 mere *Name of Life*, I say, could possibly tempt
 him to chuse a Part in such a State, and then to
cease to be; rather than to accept of the same
 Sentence, without going through the *Evils of*
this State, before it.

But then, put the Case that a Scene of *Estab-
 lished Happiness* should be opened to the View
 of this Being, to succeed the *Vanities* and *Unhap-
 pinesses* of the present; and this *Happiness* de-
 clared to be reserved for such as shall pass through
 the Other with *Virtue* and *Honour*: This would
 alter the State of the Question; and would be a
 sufficient Inducement to any such Understanding
 Being, to undertake the Conflict; and to be con-
 tent to tread the uneasy and uncertain Path of
 human Life here below; when he found it to
 lead to the Certainty, and Duration, of *Good*,
 and *Happiness* hereafter.

This way of *Discourse* is not founded on a mere
Curiosity of prying into the Secrets of unfathomable
 Wisdom; but a sober Attempt to justify the
 Ways of God to Man: And these He himself, in
 all *Points*, in which moral *Justice*, *Equity*, and
Goodness are concerned, must be supposed to
 have submitted to the Judgment of his intelli-
 gent Creatures, when He made Them *moral*
Agents, and obliged Them to govern themselves
 by

by the same Rules of *Justice, Equity, and Goodness*, which He himself observed.

S E R M.

VIII.


My Meaning, therefore, is not to pretend to judge of all the Views of infinite Wisdom, which would be *Arrogance*; but to draw an Argument from the *Moral Attributes* of GOD greatly conducing to his Honour: *viz.* That the *Best* of Beings, being unalterably happy in Himself, cannot be justly supposed to have commanded into Being a Number of intelligent Creatures, void of all Offense towards Him, upon any such unhappy Terms, as no One of them could have consented to, had it been possible for him to have judged of it: And, therefore, that such a Being ought not to be supposed to have forced Us into the poor *Habitation* of this World, without designing us for Another, and a Better.

3. I will go on, in the next Place, to argue from our peculiar Capacities, directed to the finding out the Existence and Nature of the Supreme Being; and fitted for the Worship of Him, and the Imitation of his moral Excellencies. For how *vain*, or worse than vain, are all these *Capacities*, if they be not designed by Him, who gave us them, to lead to his Favour in a future State? The *low* Concerns of *Animal* Life, and even of *Social* too, might have passed on, in a way worthy enough of this present Life, without our being made capable of the exalted Notions of

SERMON. a GOD, and of That true *Religion*, which cannot
 VIII. properly subsist, without the Expectation of a
 ~~~~~ *future State*. If there be something *real* to answer to what We can discover by the Powers given Us; then are our *Capacities* worthy of God who is their Author. If the *contrary* be supposed; how great an Absurdity is by this fixt upon *Him*, who endowed Us with these *Capacities*?

Much the same may be said of those reasonable and restless *Desires* of almost All Men; longing to continue in Life; and travelling perpetually towards greater and greater Degrees of Happiness, and made capable of them by their good Creator. These must all be accounted the fruitless *Efforts* of vain *Capacities*; unless *Life* be Happiness; and designed to be our lasting Good.

If we add to These, the common and well-known *Complaint* of all Ages, that the Affairs of *this World* are conducted, under the Inspection of *Providence*, in such a Manner, that the Best of Men, even in the ordinary Course of Things, are often seen to groan under the Weight of the same common Calamities of this Life which Other feel; and besides these, in some extraordinary and unnatural Cases, to suffer all the Evils that the Malice of wicked Men can bring upon them, for the Sake of a good Conscience: If We add, I say, such Considerations; The Argument

gument from hence will be This, That the Best SER M.  
and most Equitable of all Beings must design, VIII.  
and act, consistently with that amiable Character;   
That He cannot do this, without putting as great  
a Distinction between the *Best* and the *Worst* of  
his reasonable Creatures, in *Happiness*, as there is  
in *Behaviour*: and therefore, there being no such  
settled distinction in *this* State, but much Mi-  
sery left for the Virtuous and Upright often  
to struggle with; there must be, in the great De-  
sign of the Creator, *another* State, in which *Virtue*  
and *Happiness* shall be seen inseparably united.  
Without this, there can be no Appearance of  
*Proportion*, in the *whole moral System*: and  
with it, all the just Relations and Habitudes  
of Things are exactly preserved. Upon which  
Account we may justly conclude it to be so  
designed.

These *Considerations* are not thin *Specula-  
tions*, spun out of the *Cobwebs* of the *Schools*,  
or built upon the Subtleties of *Metaphysics*;  
but *Arguments*, founded upon the *Nature* of  
*God*, and the *Nature* of *Man*, and the sensible  
*Experience* of our present State: and particu-  
larly, upon those Notions of the Supreme Be-  
ing, which it is our Duty to embrace, and  
conduct ourselves by: and therefore, ought not  
to be entertained as the Dreams, or Wishes,  
of good Men wearied out with the Evils of

SERM. this Life; but as *Conclusions* drawn from the  
VIII. plainest and most rational Principles.

~~~~~ To these We *Christians* ought to add the  
Assurances given by *Jesus Christ*, of a *Future State* of Rewards and Punishments, without which his great Design had been all Vain and Fruitless: and these *Assurances* confirmed, beyond all reasonable Doubt, as the Voice of God himself, by that Series of Wonderful Works, and that *Resurrection* from the *Dead*, which were the Demonstrations of his being sent by God, into the World, to shew Mankind the true and only *Road* to their *eternal Happiness*, in a *continuing City to come*.

III. The *Use*, to be made by us, of what has been said, is the only remaining Point: and the Point, indeed, in which we are most concerned.


We have seen the *Conditions*, upon which we live in *this World*: how certainly Pain, Affliction, and Adversity, in all their various Forms of Misery, are our Portion here; and how small a Part of our Time any Thing that has the Appearance of *Happiness* takes up. We are, at best, rather *Amused*, than *Happy*, in this Life: rather diverted from the continual Sense, or Dread, of *Evil*, than filled and satisfied with any *Good*. There are, indeed, Images
of

of Pleasure, like Phantoms, dancing before our Eyes; and, like Phantoms, soon disappearing. But, even with regard to These, we are rather taken up with the Pursuit of what we have not, than satisfied with what we have. And, supposing ourselves possessed, as we falsely call it, of all the Goods of this World; in the midst of *Life*, we are in *Death*.

In these Circumstances of Distress, what *Beings*, made capable of higher Things, as We are, can forbear to wish for a more settled State of Good? And if we wish for it, our greatest Interest will incline Us to attend seriously to the *Arguments* which prove it; and to yield up Ourselves to the Force of that Evidence they carry with them: And if we be convinced of the *Reality* of such a *State*, we cannot be so insensible as not to desire a Place in it; and, if we really desire it, we cannot but be solicitous to take the true Method of obtaining it: that only Method of fitting ourselves for it, pointed out to Us by the *Religion* of *Nature*, and of *Christ*: I mean the uniform Practice of all Virtue, which is the *Imitation* of God, the *Best*, and most perfect, of all Beings.

This is the true and only *Use* of what has been said, that can possibly be made,


SERM.
VIII.
~~~~~

S E R M. with any Appearance of Reason, by any *Crea-*  
 VIII. *ture*, brought into Being by the Supreme Fa-  
ther of all Things, and endowed with all the  
 Qualities necessary to the constituting of a  
*moral Agent*.

The Thoughts which I have now laid before You, are of infinite Moment to every *reasonable Being*, condemned at present to *this World*, in which He *has no continuing City*; but framed so as to *seek One to come*.

The *Lowest*, and the most Unhappy, of all the Sons of *Adam*, may receive Support and Comfort, from this Lesson, which ought to be ever in his Mind, That the Evils of his wretched Condition, his Pains, and Sickneses, and Poverty, and all the Distress attending it, cannot last longer than his short Life; and that, after a Period put to his Life and his Miseries together, He has as good a Title to plead to a durable State of unmixed Happiness in a never-ending State, or a *continuing City to come*, from his patient and blameless Behaviour here below, as the most elevated, Prosperous, Rich and Powerfull, of all that tread on this Earth; and that his Voice will *then* be as well heard, and as much regarded, as the *Voice* of Any of Those, who perhaps thought too much of their *Superior* Exaltation above Him, in *this* State. Those in the middle State of Life, will feel the great  
 Advan-



Advantage of the *Thoughts* I have propos'd, S E R M.  
throughout their whole Conduct, in all their Bu- VIII.  
siness, and every Stage of Life. 

But what is most proper to be said of Them, in this Place, is, that They are Thoughts of equal Importance to the highest *Prince*, and the meanest *Subject*: to Those who are distinguished by the *Honours* of this World, and Those in the *common* Order of Life. For what can, indeed, be more awful and moving, and therefore, what more useful, to Those in *exalted Stations*, than to consider seriously, that, at the opening of that *Future* never-ending State, All the most dazzling Distinctions of this World shall cease; and none remain, but that *essential* One between the *Good* and the *Bad*; the *Virtuous* and *Vicious*: That no Rank shall then be regarded, but the Rank of Moral Excellence; no Guards shall attend the Great, but their Innocence, or true Repentance; and no Praises be heard from the Mouths of Flatterers, but from the Voice of their good Actions only: That in *this continuing City*, their Station shall be allotted, not according to their exalted *Power*, or *Grandeur*, or *Riches*, but according to their Use of them, here below; and that their Godlike Behaviour in this World, shall be the only Title to their *Thrones of Glory*, in the World to come?

S E R M. And let me add, that I would not permit My-  
 VIII. self to recommend such Thoughts as These, in  
 this Audience, If I were not fully persuaded  
 that they are *Thoughts*, which will blunt and  
 soften the Thorns and Cares of *Power*; will  
 throw Comfort into the Retirements of the  
*Great* and *High*; and scatter Innocence and  
 Honour through the whole *System* of their *Aspi-*  
*rons*: Which will most safely conduct them  
 through the Troubles, and Allurements, of  
 their present Situations; will animate them  
 to be like God himself, in the exerting all  
 their Capacities for the *Happiness* of the  
*World* around them; and give them an *Ambi-*  
*tion* to excel in every thing praise-worthy  
 here, in order to their obtaining a Seat in that  
 State of *future Bliss*, which is represented in  
 the *New Testament*, as a *Kingdom unshaken in*  
*the Heavens*, far out of the Reach of all such  
 Commotions and Disorders, as are seen in the  
*Kingdoms* of this World; and as a *continuing*  
*City*, the Seat of Established Happiness for  
 ever.

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*Christ's YOKE, Easy; and  
BURTHEN, Light.*


S E R M O N IX.

Preached before the KING, *Febr. 27,*  
1736-7.

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MATTHEW xi. 30.

*For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen is Light.*

**I**T is not improbable that our *Blessed Lord*, S E R M.  
when he spake these and the foregoing IX.  
Words, was looking upon Crowds of   
*Travellers*, coming up to *Jerusalem*, upon  
some great *Feast-Day*; many of them loaded  
with *Burthens*, and all tired and weary with  
their *Journey*: and that, according to his usual  
Custom in other Cases, He took Occasion  
from hence to speak to *Them*, who now wanted  
*Rest of Body*, concerning another Sort of  
*Rest*, of far greater Consequence; the true

SERM. *Rest* and Happiness of reasonable Creatures:  
 IX. calling their Minds from the low Concerns of  
 ~~~~~ their *Bodies*, to the higher ones of their immortal  
Souls; and from the Bustle and Hurry of this World, to the Calm and Quiet of true
Religion.

But, whatever the immediate *Occasion* of this Discourse might be; the *Intent* of it is so important, and so general, that every Man, in every Age, is equally concerned in it, who feels in his Breast any Degree of Reason and Reflexion. For it is very evident that, in this and the two foregoing *Verses*, our Lord is inviting Men to take upon them *this Religion*, and to imitate *his Example*, as the happiest Course they can chuse. At the 28th Verse; *Come unto Me, all ye that Labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you Rest*. Come unto me all ye who are wishing for *Happiness* and *Rest*, but are still in a State of Uneasiness and Disquiet, by pursuing it in wrong Methods; and I will shew you the only way to that *Rest*, which is worthy of your Searches. Verse the 29th; *Take my Yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in Heart: and ye shall find Rest unto your Souls*. Enter upon the *Practice* of my *Moral Rules*; or, in other Words, imitate my Example, in the Practice of every Virtue, and particularly of *Meekness* and *Humility*,

mility, which are in their nature *Rest* and *Quiet* S E R M. themselves; and you will quickly find your- IX. selves in that State of Happiness you are seeking. Then follow the Words of the Text, verse 30; *For my Yoke is Easy, and my Burthen is Light*. For that *System* of moral Duties and Obligations, which I am come to enforce and lay upon you, is of such a Nature, as to be much more agreeable, and easy, to such a Creature as Man is; and much more conducive to the *Quiet* and Happiness of such a Being; than a Freedom from it, or an Engagement in any Course of a contrary Nature, can be.

Thus far these Words of our Blessed Lord may, justly and naturally, be extended. For He plainly appears to speak to Such as are in a *restless* and unquiet Condition wanting and wishing for *Happiness*; from his offering to shew them the only way to it. He plainly intends what He says of *his Yoke*, to be understood of the *Moral Rules* and Obligations of his Religion, because He himself instances in *two* of them; *viz. Meekness*, and *Humility*. He plainly appears to comprehend, in what He says, his whole *System* of *Virtue*, from his calling it by the Name of *his Yoke* and *his Burthen*; which must mean his *Whole Moral Law*. And He certainly intends what he says of the
Easiness

SERM. *Easiness* of his *Yoke*, and the *Lightness* of his
 IX. *Burthen*, to be understood in Comparison of
 another, set in Opposition to it; because he
 still calls it a *Yoke* and a *Burthen*: Words,
 which suppose it not to be void of all present
 Difficulty, and Uneasiness. And the *Whole* is
 plainly meant, in Comparison of the *Yoke* and
Burthen of *Sin*, or *Immortality*; because He in-
 stances, expressly, in the *Practice* of the *moral*
Virtues mentioned, as the Way to Happiness.

I may, therefore, very reasonably, take
 Occasion from these Words, to consider how
 truly and justly it is said, that the *Yoke* here
 spoken of fits *easier*, upon such a Creature as
 Man; and the *Burthen* of practical Religion
lighter; than any of a contrary Sort: or, in
 other Words, to shew that the *Practice*, im-
 plied in *This*, is a much surer way to his Hap-
 piness, than That of *Vice* and *Immortality*.
 In order to this,

I. The *first* necessary Step is, to consider
 what a Sort of Being Man truly is.

II. The *second* will be, to enquire what
 Circumstances are necessarily required to the
 making any *Course* of *Action* easy and happy to
 such a Creature.

III. And the *third* will be, To shew that
 an uniform Course of *Virtue*, or practical Religi-
 on,

on, has a Title to all these Requisites ; which the Course of Life, *opposite* to it, cannot pretend to.

S E R M.

I X.

1. As to the *first* of these ; it is but Folly to spend our Time in vain Complaints of the Imperfections of our Nature : That we are not made, on one hand, with Abilities to practice all *Virtue*, in every Circumstance of Life, without any Inclination, or Temptation, to the contrary ; or, on the other hand, capable of enjoying unbounded Pleasure, wherever it offers itself, without any Restraints from within, or any ill Consequences from without. Our Business is to consider ourselves as we truly are ; and not as we could wish ourselves to be : as Creatures, related to the inferior Part of the *Creation*, in our *Bodies*, and *bodily Appetites* ; but greatly distinguished from it, by a Faculty within us, which enables Us to find out the Existence of a GOD above Us ; the Excellency of his Nature ; the true Glory, and Duty, of a rational Being ; and the Expedience, and Becomingness, of One Sort of Conduct above another. For to consider *Man*, either as a Creature merely *Animal*, without any Direction in his Nature but to the *Animal Pleasures* ; or as a *Creature* merely *rational*, without any Bias from Flesh and Blood, or any Temptation from the present Scene of Things ; is a very *partial* and unequal Consideration ;

SERM. deration; and likely to carry us but a little way in the *Enquiry* now before us.

2. After this, the *Second Step* is to consider what *Circumstances* are requisite to the making any Course of Life easy, and agreeable, to such a *Creature* as Man, certainly, is.

And here, there are *two Things*, which seem to me to have a just Claim to This, *viz.* That this *Course of Action* should be agreeable to the best and governing Part of his Frame: And, That it should either have no Difficulties, and Distresses, of any Sort, in it; or that those Difficulties, and Distresses, should be, at least, sufficiently compensated by Advantages, either present, or future, or both.

1. To make any Course of Action, *easy* and happy, to *Man*, it must certainly be agreeable to that *rational Principle* within Him, which, He is sensible, has a Right to guide and direct Him in his Actions.

The *Liberty* of a reasonable Being is his *Happiness*: and the *true Liberty* of such a Being, cannot consist in an unbounded Freedom from the Obligation of all Laws; but in the ready and settled Habit of following that *Principle*, or that *Authority*, which is, evidently, entitled to the Rule and Government of Him. For by this means it is, that a Person, or intelligent Agent, comes to do what Himself approves

proves of; what Himself recommends to his own Practice, *before* Action, and delights in and applauds, *after* it. On the contrary, it is the *Slavery of moral Conduct*, which is most of all to be dreaded by such a Being: And the most hard and intolerable *Yoke*, and the most grievous and oppressive *Burthen*, to Him, must be a *Life*, in which He is hurried, by the Command of an *Inferior* Principle, got loose from the Influence of the *Superior*, into such a *Scheme* of Actions, as Himself can never seriously approve, *before Execution*; and cannot but wish undone, *after* it. It is with *Moral Liberty*, as it is with *Political Liberty*, in its Perfection; which is greatly mistaken, and ill-treated, when it is supposed to be *Licentiousness* absolutely free from Rule; whilst its very Essence consists in a ready and uniform Submission to such *Principles*, or *Persons*, as have a right to govern us; and govern us by such Laws as Reason, (consulting the Good of the whole Society) declares it to be best for us to obey.

If we ascend higher in our Thoughts to That Being who holds all Perfection in Himself, it is no Presumption to say, what He accounts his own Glory; That it is the *Liberty* of Almighty God himself, to be constantly, and without any Deviation, governed by the
 4 eternal

SERM. eternal and immutable *Laws* of Good and
 IX. Right, Just and Equal. From whence we
 may justly argue, that no Being capable, in
 any Degree, of knowing any Part of those
Laws, can have any other *Moral Liberty* than
This; or desire any other, upon any reasona-
 ble or honourable Terms.

Consequently, on the other hand, it must
 be the Effence of *Moral Slavery* to Man, to
 be arbitrarily governed by such *Powers*, as He
 knows to have no Right to any Command over
 Him; or hurried into Action, by such *Laws*
 and Commands, as He himself cannot think
 of in any other Light than as Contradictions to
 the Dictates of the Superior Principle, and in-
 consistent with his own Peace, and all Order
 within Him. Neither does the present tran-
 sient *Pleasure* of obeying them, in any Instance,
 at all alter or affect this Truth: unless *Pleasure*,
 against Reason, can change Evil into Good;
 and alter the Nature of Things, so as to turn
Bitter into *Sweet*; the *bitter* Reproaches and
 Resentments of an offended Mind, into the
sweet Approbations of its *ruling* Principle.

It may, therefore, be justly inferred, from
 what I have already said, that it is impossible
 that any *Course* of *Action* can be an *easy Yoke*, or
 a *light Burthen*, to *Man*, in which He is ever
 contradicting the Superior Principle within, and
 the

the only one He has to consult, and to be influenced by; and is guided by the impetuous *Rule of Another*, which was made to obey: because, such a Course, must necessarily beget Self-Condernation, and the worst Sort of inward Distress; and make the Man his own Enemy, and his own Punisher. But,


2. To the making any Course of Life *easy*, and *happy*, to such a Creature as *Man*, I will be free to own it not to be quite enough, that it be perfectly agreeable to his *best* and governing Part; but necessary also, that it should either have no greater Difficulties, and Disadvantages, in it, than what are certainly found in That opposite to it: or that These Difficulties, and Disadvantages, should be sufficiently and fully compensated by Advantages, *present*, or *future*, or *both*.

This needs no Sort of *Proof*, or *Illustration*; that, if any *Course* of *Action* has *Difficulties* in it, next to insuperable; or *Uneasinesses*, next to intolerable; there can be but little Hope of *Constancy* enough, in such a Creature as *Man*, to keep Him steady in it: But that if the *Difficulties* in it are not worthy to be named with the *Advantages* and *Encouragements* attending it; this will render it an agreeable Task to every well-informed Mind. If the *present* Advantages of it be but *small*; yet, if the *future*

SR E M. *ture* ones be vast and durable, tho' they be
 IX. supposed only probable, This will weigh great-
 ly against the present Difficulties of it. But if
 it should be found to have a more sure and pro-
 bable Title than the contrary, to all present
 Advantages, worth the seeking after; and the
 surest allowed Title to all *future* ones; only
 supposing us to be Creatures accountable to
 that GOD who made us: These Considerations,
 joined to what I have said, under the former
 Head, will be more than sufficient to place it
 far above any *Course of Life* that can be oppos-
 ed to it; and recommend it to the Choice of
 Men, as the most *easy Yoke*, and *lightest Bur-*
then; or as the *Course of Life*, much more
 free than any other from all the Evils that are
 most to be avoided by such a Being.


III. Let us now proceed to the *third* Propo-
 sition I laid down; *viz.* That a settled *Course*
 of *practical Religion*, or *Virtue*, has a much
 surer Title to all these Requisites before-men-
 tioned, than that of *Vice* and *Immorality*.

And here, I believe, it is an uncontested
 Truth, that the habitual Practice of *Virtue*, is
 the Practice fully approved and applauded by
 our *best* and *superior* Faculty; by that *Princi-*
ple within Us, which, we are sensible, was
 given to rule and govern our Actions. And
 this single Truth will make a vast Difference
 between

between the Practice of *Virtue*, and that of SERM.
Vice; That, to the *Former* a Man is constant- IX.
 ly directed by serious Consideration, and by a 
 willing Choice, which is the Result of it; that
in it, He is accompanied with his own Ap-
 plauses, and the secret Approbations of his
 Conscience; that *after* it, He is entertained
 with the Pleasure of a sweet Reflexion, and
 the Praises of unpolluted Reason: That, on
 the contrary, to the *Latter* He is never, in
 any one Instance, led by the serious Confide-
 rations and Arguments formed by Reason and
 Judgment; that the more he considers, and
 reflects, and reasons, the more he is dissuaded
from it; that he is hurried *into* it by quite the
 contrary Principle; that he is accompanied *in*
 it by frequent Reproaches of his own Reason;
 that he is often pursued *after* it by the Lashes
 of a guilty Conscience, and by the stinging
 Thought, that he has done what he can never
 justify at the Tribunal of his own Heart, or
 the more impartial one of Him who made him
 what he is.

Of this one might make the wickedest of
 Men, not void of all common Sense, Judges
 themselves: whether it was serious Considera-
 tion and Reflexion that made them Sinners;
 whether it was the last Result of their *Judg-*
ment and *Reason*, that the Path they tread

SERM. would lead them to their greatest *Happiness* ;
 IX. or, whether the Course of *Vice* be the Course
 agreeable to their superior and governing Principle. On the contrary, let the lowest Order of good and virtuous Men witness, whether their *Virtue* ever gave them any Uneasiness, upon the Review of it; whether the Sentiment of sorrowful Repentance was ever stirred up in their Minds, by the Thought that they had been just, or temperate, or humble, or charitable; or, whether They ever felt any Remorses within, upon looking back upon the virtuous and righteous Part of their Lives. They will give Testimony, every one of them, that if they ever have felt any Uneasiness of that kind in their lowest and most desponding Moments; this has been owing to the Suspicion, that They have not done enough in the Cause of *Virtue* : not that they have been so good, as they have been ; but that they have been no better. On the other hand, if any Ease of Mind, in a religious Sense, has been experienced by any habitual *Sinners* ; it is undeniable that it has never arisen from any *Pleasure* resulting from the Review of a *vicious* Course : but from their deep Sorrow, on account of their past Conduct ; and from the secret Hope they sometimes entertain, that GOD will accept such Sorrow instead of that *Virtue* and
Holiness,

Holiness, which they mourn the want of. All SERM.
 which puts it beyond Doubt, that a steady IX.
Course of Virtue, is the *Course*, entitled to the 
 constant Approbation of our best Part, and to
 the Favour of that *Principle* within, which
 was given to rule and direct us: and that the
Course, contrary to this, is accompanied with
 all its Dislike, and Displeasure.


2. If we now proceed to the *Second* of Those
Requisites before-mentioned, “ That to make
 any *Course of Life*, agreeable to such a Crea-
 ture as Man, it should either have no *Diffi-*
culties, or *Distresses*, in it; or, that *they* should
 be sufficiently compensated by *Advantages*,
present, or *future*, or *Both*; We shall, I
 hope, find it also true, that a *Life of Virtue* has
 manifestly the Preference, in this View, that
 the *unnatural Discouragements*, it may, in some
 extraordinary Cases, meet with, are more than
 compensated by the *Advantages* attending it;
 and that the general Rule, in the *natural* *Course*
 of Things, is greatly in its *Favor*.

To this Purpose, let it be considered, That
 the *present Advantages* of it are as certain, as
 Any of the most certain *Pleasures*, or *Profits*, of
Sin; and of much more Importance to such a
 Creature as *Man* is. It constantly, and with-
 out Variation, brings along with it a *Peace*,
 and Serenity, and Joy of Mind; never known

SER M. or felt without it. It tends, naturally, to the
 IX. *Health* of that Body itself, upon which some
 ~~~~~ place the highest Value; to as good and cre-  
 ditable a *Situation* in Life, as ought to be wish-  
 ed; to such a *Reputation*, as a Man would chuse  
 upon the best Considerations: And, in the En-  
 joyment of the Goods peculiar to this World,  
 being bounded only by *Reason* itself, it is al-  
 ways free from those many Embarrassments,  
 Disappointments, Uneasinesses, Anxieties, Per-  
 plexities, and present Miseries, to which the  
 unbounded Enjoyment of the same Goods is  
 every Day seen to expose Men.

On the other hand, the Practice contrary to  
 this, if it has any Effect upon the *Mind*, (as  
 it must have, as long as the *Mind* exists) it is  
 to disquiet and discompose it, by such well-  
 grounded *Uneasinesses*, as are themselves *present*  
*Unhappinesses*. The Effect of it upon the *Body*  
 is, in many Cases, to bring on *Ruine*, and  
*Dissolution*, before it's Time; to fill it with more  
 Distempers, and invite more Calamities into  
 it, than would, otherwise, be experienced.  
 The Effect of it upon the Name and *Reputa-*  
*tion*, is no better; if the *best Reputation* be the  
 Esteem of the Good and Wise. And upon  
 Men's *Estates*, the Influence of *some* Vices is  
 as bad, in lessening them, and bringing them  
 to Nothing; and of *Others*, in making them  
 useless



useless to the Possessors themselves. And if SERM.  
 this be plainly the Case, that, excepting in IX.  
 some very *unnatural* and extraordinary Cir-   
 cumstances of Affairs, the Cause of *Vice* has  
 nothing to boast of, even in this *present* State;  
 and that the *Course of Virtue* has, in itself, a  
 constant Fountain of *inward* Ease, and a *natu-*  
*ral* Tendency to all the *outward* desirable  
*Happineffes* of Life; here, at this Point, all the  
 Boasts and Pretensions of *Vice* cease at once.

It is *Virtue*, alone, that can look forward,  
 with any Courage and Satisfaction, into a *fu-*  
*ture* State of Things. *Vice* is no *Rival* there:  
 nor does it so much as presume to think of  
 any Claim to *future* Rewards; but, as long as  
 Thought remains, is often allarmed with the  
 Fear, or Suspicion, that, as *Punishment* is due  
 to it, *Punishment* will hereafter overtake  
 it. I say, it is a State of *Virtue*, alone,  
 that can make Us feel a Pleasure in hoping and  
 thinking, That, as surely as there is a GOD,  
 who made Us reasonable Creatures capable of  
 the Guidance of *Moral Rules*; as surely, as He  
 has made us with all the Tokens of Creatures  
*accountable* for our Actions; and as surely as  
 there is a *State* after this poor Life: so surely  
 will the Favour of GOD, and all the proper  
 Marks of it, be shewn to the truly Virtuous;  
 and the *Rewards* of *another* and *better* Life,

SERMON. more than make up for all that was grievous  
 IX. in *this*, to the most unfortunate and oppressed  
 of all the Lovers and Followers of it. And We  
*Christians* know that it was the great *Design* of  
 our *Blessed Lord*, to bring *Life* and *Immortality*,  
 in a future State, to *greater Light*, than they  
 were viewed in, before; in order to make his  
*Yoke* still the *more easy*, and his *Burthen* the  
*more light*, to All who should take his Re-  
 ligion upon them.

I have thus endeavoured to induce you to  
 chuse the *Yoke* and *Burthen* spoken of, in the  
 Text; that is, the *Obligations* of *practical*  
*Religion*, or *Virtue*, before the *Slavery* of *Vice*;  
 the only *Rival* which stands in Competition  
 with it. I have compared their several Pre-  
 tensions: And I am not sensible that, in this  
 Comparison, I have given one Grain of Weight  
 to the Scale of *Virtue*, which does not, unde-  
 niably, belong to it; or taken from the *con-*  
*trary* Scale any one Advantage which it could  
 possibly claim.

And now, if I may conclude with a *Word*  
 more peculiarly proper to *this Assembly*, and  
*this Place*, in which I now speak; I will add,  
 That, if what I have been laying before you be  
 the Truth of God, of such Importance as to  
 be worthy of your Attention; it cannot but be  
 the immediate Conclusion from the Whole, in

the Breast of every Person of *High Rank*, here present, that a settled Course of *Virtue* must be the only Course of *Honour*, to such a Being as Man is; and that the more established any Man is, in this Course, the greater Title he has to be called a *Man of Honour*. The Word *Honour* still remains amongst us, applied to the Behaviour of Men; and, if the *Ideas*, annexed to *Words*, be not yet entirely confounded, it can mean Nothing distinct from, much less contrary to, *Virtue*. Nor are the Differences of Things yet so lost, but that the *Word* is still designed, in all the Instances of Conduct and Action in which it is used, to signify a Degree of *Virtue* even exalted above the common Pitch; and exercised in Cases, to which human Laws, and human Eyes, often cannot reach; but the Right and Reason of the Thing do: as in those of *Gratitude* to *Benefactors* known only to Ourselves; *Truth* to the most secret Promises; *Justice* and *Equity*, as such, where *no Court*, and no Man's Judgment, can enforce it. These, and many other Instances, shew an Acknowledgment, in Those who use the *Word*, of the strict Obligation to *Virtue*, as the Dictate of the rational Faculty; and of the utter Disagreeableness of the contrary to that *secret Principle* in Them, the

SERM. Power of which, in some such Instances, they  
IX. cannot forbear to feel, and follow.

~ This is, in Effect, to acknowledge, what is a most certain Consequence, that a Man of *Virtue*, and a Man of *Honour*, through the whole System of *Morality*, are only two Expressions for one and the same Thing: and that it is a *Contradiction* to the *Nature* of Things, as well as the greatest *Abuse* of *Language*, to put afunder what GOD and Reason have joined together.

And, indeed, what can be the *Honour* of *Man*, but that *Practice*, which is unvariably agreeable to his superior and ruling Principle? Let him not claim any other, for fear He should be found to claim the *Honour* of *lower Animals*, instead of *his own*; and to boast of *That*, in which many of the *irrational* Kind, could They act in our World, would greatly excell him. For, in *Men* themselves, it requires but a very low Capacity, and little more than *Inclination* free from the Restraints of Reason and Reflexion, to be *dishonourably wicked*.

This is no wandering from the *Words*, and *Doctrine*, of the *Text*. For I mean to infer from what I have been now saying, that *Virtue* must be the *Easiest Yoke*, and the most *Light Burthen*, to a Mind sensible of the Rules of the strictest *Honour*; because this, we see,

is ever acknowledged of some particular *In-* S E R M.  
*stances* of it; and therefore, cannot be denied of IX.  
 any other *Branches* of that *God-like System*,  
 which relies, in every Part of it equally, upon  
 the same eternal and immutable *Laws of Right*,  
 and *Truth*: and, on the other hand, that a  
 Course of *Vice*, and *Immortality*, must be the most  
*galling Yoke*, and the most *heavy Burthen*, to  
 such a Mind; because it is a most uneasy Con-  
 tradiction to those same *Rules of Honour*, by  
 which the Man acknowledges himself, of  
*Right*, to be governed, and preserved from  
*Moral Evil*, in *some Cases*; which *Rules* ex-  
 tend equally to *every Branch* of the whole *Sys-*  
*tem of Iniquity*.

And here, let me repeat, That no imagined  
*Pleasure*, or *Profit*, can alter this Truth: be-  
 cause Nothing of that Kind can turn *Unreason-*  
*able* into *Reasonable*; nor, consequently, the  
*Dishonour* of an *intelligent Being* into its *Honour*.  
 Nor can all the *Ensigns* and *Trappings* of *out-*  
*ward Greatness* (in another Sense, sometimes,  
 called *Honour*,) make it otherwise. They will  
 always render *Vice* more deformed, and more  
 disagreeable, in the Eyes of all who think  
 rightly; because it is truly more out of *Cha-*  
*racter*, in such a Garb, than in the *Coarser*  
*Dress* of the *Lower World*: but They can ne-  
 ver give to it the peculiar Privilege of *Virtue*;  
 which,

S E R M. which, alone, ever was, and still remains,  
 IX. the true *Honour* of all the Great and Noble of  
 this World, as well as their Duty and Happiness.

I have thus, in the best Manner I could, explained and enforced a very important Declaration of our *Blessed Lord*, concerning the Practice of all the *Moral Duties* of His holy *Religion*: and, I hope, in doing this, I have been preaching *Christ*, and his *Doctrine*. It is the *Glory* of His *Gospel*, that the great Design of its Founder was to direct his Followers to the whole *System* of *Natural Religion*, or *Morality*. His *Doctrine*, upon which He rests their *Happiness*, is *Virtue*. His *Life* was an unspotted Example of all *Virtue*. His *Death* is the greatest Argument for *Virtue*. And his *Sufferings* are *blasphemed*, when they are represented as designed for the Advantage of any *Sinners*, but such as have forsaken their Sins, and are returned into the Paths of *Virtue*. Let Every One, therefore, who professes to follow *Christ*, as his *Master*, learn of Him; and take his *Yoke*, and his *Burthen*, upon Him: And he will find Rest to his Soul, in a Conduct agreeable to his own Mind, in every Part, and every Relation, of Life, *here*; and unspeakable Happiness, *hereafter*.

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Of PERSECUTION *on Account of*  
RELIGION.

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S E R M O N X.

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ROM. xiv. 4.

*Who art Thou that Judgest Another Man's Ser-  
vant? To his own Master, He standeth, or  
falleth.*

**I**N a former <sup>a</sup> Discourse upon these Words, S E R M.  
I observed, that the Foundation of all X.  
*outward Persecution*, for any sort of Differ-  
ences about Religion, was laid in the Mind  
*within*; that the first Step was the *Inward* Act  
of *Censuring* and *Judging* our Neighbours, on  
Account of what They esteem, as any Part  
of the Worship or Service of God: But  
that the Evil seldom stopped there, but was  
generally observed, when Opportunity offered,

<sup>a</sup> *Note*, This was the *Second* Sermon upon this Text.  
See the *First* in p. 47. of this Volume.

SERM. to break out into open *Violence* to Men's  
 x. *Bodies* or *Estates*, for the Sake of their Con-  
 sciences.

This being the Case, the first Step I chose to take, was to attempt the Cure of that wicked Distemper of Mind *within*; or, to shew the inexcusable Iniquity of the *Inward Act*, before it can proceed to *Outward Evils*. This I endeavoured to do, by observing,

1. That we are not qualified *thus* to sit in *Judgment* upon One Another.

2. That it is not the Province of *Us*, who are but *Fellow-Servants* to the same *Master*.

3. That it is a Province, which our Great and Common *Master* hath peculiarly reserved to Himself. And,

4. That it is our great Business to prepare for the *final Judgment* of *Ourselves*, and not to be found *judging* Others.

But, as Men have been, in all Places almost, and in all Times, observed to proceed from *Inward Censures*, to the Application of *Outward Force*, and *Worldly Evils*, in Matters purely *Spiritual*, and belonging to *Conscience*; I shall now pursue this Subject farther; and endeavour, in the plainest Manner possible, to shew the great and unpardonable Iniquity of all *Outward Persecution*, on *Religious Accounts*: And this, by such Considerations, as will  
 at



at once determine *That*, and answer the chief Pretences alledged by Any Men for it. SERM.  
X.

Now, this Great Evil of *Persecution* is, by All such *Patrons* of it as speak seriously of believing the *Gospel*, and regarding the Salvation of Mankind, always avowed, to be built upon the Great Importance to All Men, that They should be Believers of the *One* only true Religion, and sound Members of the *One* only true *Church* of *Christ*, in order to their *Eternal Salvation*: And upon the *Duty* of bringing Men to their own Happiness, by *Force* of *Outward Evils*, when other Methods fail. I know, there is *Another* Reason, or Excuse, for it, sometimes mentioned; taken from the Peace and Quiet of *Society*, and of the Christian World about Us, which is pretended to require such an Agreement, as this Outward Force is designed to produce and establish. But *this*, (not to mention that it is built upon a great Mistake, directly contrary to Truth and Experience) being merely of a *political* Nature; and plainly founded upon the Wicked Maxim, that it is of no Importance what is *True*, or *False*; what is pleasing to Almighty God, or not; and throwing *Religion* quite out of the *Question*; I shall not now enter at all into the Merits of so weak and worldly a Pretense; but shall only consider the *Former*:  
which,

SERM. which, being the most honourable Pretense  
 x. for *Persecution*, is always the most avowed:  
 ~~~~~ Few caring to own that they mean nothing but  
 this World, and their own *Power*, or *private Interest*, in it. This then being plainly put upon the Importance of right Sentiments about Religion, and the true *Church of Christ*, out of which there can be no Salvation,

I. The *first* Consideration which offers itself, is this; that supposing, the *Importance* of *Truth* would justify Us; yet, without the Certainty of our being *Infallible*, in what we ourselves hold to be *Truth* in Religion, it would be most unreasonable, and inexcusable, to act against our *Fellow-Creatures*, by the Application of *Outward Force*. *Persecution*, you may know from all History, takes a great Compass, and is seen to exert itself, not only with Regard to the Fundamental Truths of all Religion; but, (We may say, chiefly and most commonly,) for the Support of Those *many* inferior, or lesser Points, in which the Thoughts of serious and sober Men ever were, and ever are likely to be, different. And if, in These, or any of These, We make a wrong Judgment; then, Every Step we take is not only out of the Paths of *Charity*, but of that *Truth* likewise, the
 Name

Name of which we make use of to cover our S E R M.
Uncharitableness. X.

This is so plain, in the Case before us, that the *Romanists*, who generally take Care to make their Scheme of *Absurdities* consistent with it self, *first* assume to themselves an *Infal-
lible* unerring *Judgment*, before They venture to affirm to You, that You shall believe, and profess, what They think fit. For They well know that, if They should own Them-
selves, to be liable to Errors, and to be *fallible* Men, in all contested Points of Religion, They could not claim the Submission due only to *Infallibility*, in Matters of *Faith* and *Worship*: and so, They chuse rather to lay their *Founda-
tion* in *Impudence*, than to lose the Benefit of *worldly Terrors*, for the enlarging the *Bounds* of their Church.


But such an *Outrage* upon the common Sense of Mankind, cannot be carried by mere Dint of *Affurance*. For it comes to no more than This, “ We affirm that We are *infalli-
ble*: and therefore, you are bound to obey Us, as such: neither can They themselves, who utter this Oracle, tell Us, in what *Place*, and *Person*, or *Persons*, We shall certainly find this *Infallibility*.

This therefore, is a *Voice*, little becoming such a Creature, as *Man* is, even the most
elevated

SERM. elevated of all so called: who every Day finds
 x. within himself the Experiences of a Creature,
 capable of being deceived; and standing in
 need of all favourable Allowances, both from
 God, and his Fellow-Creatures. But,

II. Supposing that We could be, not only morally certain, but infallibly secure, that All the Points which We ourselves embrace as Parts of Religion, were really True, and Irreprehensible; the next thing to be considered is, That it is naturally impossible, by outward Evils, to force the *Inward Assent* of Others; or to make their real Sentiments about those Points conformable to our own. For the *Assent* of the *Mind* to any thing as Truth, must be upon such Evidence, as makes it appear to be Truth. Now nothing *External* can make any Proposition appear True to a Man's Understanding. Whatever doth that, must be of a kind, congenial to the Mind within: To which outward Force bears no Similitude, nor Relation. It is *Reason* and *Argument*, either real, or supposed, that works *within*; and which alone must do so, till the Nature of Man, and of Truth, be totally altered.

If a Blind Man were put upon the Rack, day after day; and intense Torments applied to Him, for the great Crime of not seeing the
beautiful

beautiful Colours, which his Neighbours see. SERM.
 This might extort from him a Protestation, that X.
 He doth see them; nay, it might create in 
 Him such an Inclination to see them, that
 He might *fancy*, He did so: But it is plainly
 true, that it would not make Him really see
 any thing like them. He would still be the
 same *Blind Man*; incapable of seeing, and un-
 acquainted with *Colours*, till All Defects should
 be rectified, and All Things requisite to the
 Purpose of *Sight*, should be rightly disposed.

Thus it is, in the greater Case before Us. All
 Men are pleased to suppose, that They them-
 selves see and perceive *Truth*, and that Others
 are blind, and stupid, just so far as They differ
 from Them. Be it so. Let *Us* be wise and know-
 ing; and let the Herd around us be all Blindness,
 and Ignorance. Must it follow, therefore, that
 the Application of *Outward Evils* will work that
 Persuasion in Others, which will make Them,
 altogether such as we are, in the Inward Senti-
 ment? No. It may create a Wicked Prevari-
 cation, a false Protestation, an impious Hypo-
 crisy; all ending in *Irreligion* and *Atheism*,
 which We must in great Measure answer
 for: Or, It may go so far, as to make Crea-
 tures, distracted with the Intensity of Pain,
fancy at last that They see what Others see,
 and believe what Others believe. But this can

S E R M. be no more than Imagination, or Fancy ; be-
 x. cause it is plain that the *Medium* made Use of, is
 not the proper Mean, or Instrument, to convey
 a real Persuasion. *Force* is not *Evidence* ;
Torment is not *Argument*. And therefore,
 whatever it may work, tho' bearing never so
 much Resemblance to *Persuasion* ; yet it cannot
 be *That* it self in Reality, because That can no
 more be the Effect of any thing merely ex-
 ternal, than the *Sight* of a *Blind Man* can be
 restored by tormenting him in an improper
 Place, and Manner.

This is so plain, that Those who profess to
 argue for any sort of *outward* Penalties, or
 Inconveniencies, upon Accounts merely Reli-
 gious, if They ever touch this Argument, only
 alledge, that those outward Things duly ap-
 plied, may make Persons the more willingly
 attend to Argument and Reason : For so Every
 thing is called by Men, which Themselves hold,
 or would appear to hold. And from this very
Concession it is plain, that it is the *Evidence* and
Argument, which is the Mean of this supposed
 Conviction ; and that even by Themselves no-
 thing but this is supposed, or can be supposed,
 to work a real Change, in the Persuasion, and
 inward Sentiments of any Man. And this
 being the only Gloss that can be put upon this
 Proceeding,

III. It is to be considered that, supposing S E R M.
This were possible; it is neither the Business, X.
 nor the Interest of *Truth*, to be received, by
 such Methods, or in such a Manner. It is
 much *better*, and more pleasing, in the Eyes of
 Almighty God; if We can judge at all, either
 of his Nature, or of his *Revelation* by *Jesus*
Christ; That any Man, in the Uprightness
 and Sincerity of his Heart, should remain in
 an *Error*, than that He should embrace the
Truth, so induced, and so persuaded to it.
 It is the great Interest of *Truth*, to be received
 upon such *Motives*, and *Principles*, as are
 manly and honest; such as lay the Foundation
 deep within, and are directly opposite and con-
 tradictory to Those by which alone *Falshood* is,
 or can be, supported.

But when a Man is worked upon, by Tor-
 ments, or any sort of *outward* Inconveniences
 only, to wish, or incline, to see a *Point* to be
True; and the *Inclination* carries Him to as-
 sent, as He thinks, to the supposed *Arguments*
 for it; He is not at all sure that He hath not
 parted with his *Integrity*, for a *Speculation*;
 that He hath not made Ship-wreck of his *Con-*
science, for the sake of a supposed *Faith*: or, that
 He is not worthy of that Imputation of hold-
 ing the *Truth*, in *Unrighteousness*. It is plain-

S E R M. ly an *Accidental* thing to *Him*, if He should,
 x. by this Method, be brought to a *Right* Opin-
 ion in any thing. It is wrought by such Meth-
 ods, as would as certainly have turned him
 from *Truth* to *Error*, as from *Error* to *Truth*.
 He doth not, therefore, reap the Honour of a
 sincere and hearty *Lover of Truth*; and per-
 haps loses entirely the Reward of all his for-
 mer Uprightness and Integrity. Almighty
 God gains no *Servant*, no faithful *Dependent*,
 in *Him*: nor doth the Man secure to Himself
 any Share in the Favour and Love of God;
 as far as We know, either by *Nature*, or the
Gospel, the Will of our Heavenly Father.

And, as it is not at all the Interest of *Truth*, to
 be accidentally received, just in the same man-
 ner, as *Error* it self might; so, is it the great-
 est Indignity and Dishonour that can possibly
 be offered to that same *Truth*, for whose Ser-
 vice, as it is pretended, this great Concern is
 shewn. For what hath *Truth* to boast against
 it's *Enemy*, and it's Opposite, but that the *One*
 stands in need of nothing but *Light* and *Evi-*
dence, to recommend it to Men's Minds; and
 that the *Other* cannot be supported without the
 Passions and *Wrath* of *Man*? This Boasting is
 entirely destroyed, when the Methods of pro-
 pagating and supporting *Truth* and *Falshood*,
 are made the same. This puts them upon an
 equal

equal Foot, and makes their Glory the same: SERM.
 For, whatever becomes of *Falshood*, this Method X.
 extinguishes all the *Beauty* and *Glory* of *Truth*,
 by conveying it to the Minds of Men, in a
 Method unworthy of any thing, but the
grossest Falshoods.

This, therefore, is certain to All who know the Value of Integrity and Honesty in the Eyes of *Almighty God*; that, supposing the Application of *Outward Evils* could create a real Change of the Persuasion within, and that for the better, as to the mere *Truth* of any *Proposition*; yet, *Error* it self, joined with Uprightness and Sincerity of Soul, cannot but be more valuable in the Account of our Great Judge, than *Truth*, either accidentally embraced, or infused into the Mind by the Workings of *Force*, and the Considerations of *this World*. But it cannot be supposed, that such a *Persuasion* within can really be the Effect of *Outward Evils*. Nor indeed do *They* who make use of them, at all trouble themselves about the *True Sentiments* of Those whom They use in a such manner. All that They think of, is to draw the same Words, or Sounds, *that is*, the same outward *Professions*, from All. This leads us, in the next Place, to observe,

SERM.

X.

IV. That to *force* the *Professions* of Men contrary to the *Dictates* of their *Consciences*, in Matters of *Religion*, and *Divine Worship*, is directly contributing to the Worst of Sins; and acting a Part the most inexcusable, and unreasonable. Any Instances of *Torment* or *Misery*, applied to this Purpose, even if it were in Favour of the plainest Proposition in *Mathematics*, would, in the natural Tendency of Things, be so far from inclining, either a generous or a perverse Mind, to the *real Belief* of it, that They would rather create an *Averseness* to, and *Hatred* of, a *Point*, which stands in need of such Methods of Support. And, supposing that *Weariness* under *Evils*, at Length shall make Men *profess* such Points to be *true*, which They cannot believe to be so: this is, in Those who make use of such Methods to this Purpose, the Great Crime of ensnaring their Fellow-Creatures into *Hypocrisy*, and in the End, perhaps into *Atheism* itself; into a Contempt of every Thing truly good, and a Disregard of what is *True*, and what is *False*. So that I should not doubt to say, that All the *Inward Infidelity* and *Atheism*, that is in the Hearts of so many Men, in those Countries, where *Persecution* is openly avowed, is in great Measure owing to that *Persecution*,

tion, which pretends to root it out; and will be charged upon the *Persecutors* themselves, by the Great Judge of the World, when He shall come, to bring to Light the hidden Things of Darkneſs, and to make manifeſt the Counſels of the Heart. Let us go on now to obſerve,

SERM.

X.



V. That, as it is juſt, and holds good, in the Caſe of all *Truth*, that it ought to be received, by every Man, in the *Love* of it, and not in the *Fear* of any of this World's Evils: ſo, is it plain, that the more *Important* the Truth is, and the more it relates to another State, and his own *Eternal Salvation*; the more ſtill is it certain, that it ought not to be forced, but to be left to the Man's own Conſcience, and to that *Thought* and *Reflexion*, which were given to Man for the balancing and receiving it; and which alone entitle Him to *Reward*, or *Puniſhment*, for his Conduct relating to it.

The Reason is plain; becauſe the Importance of any *Truth* to the Service of God, or the Happineſs of Man, makes it more requiſite, that the *Man* ſhould purſue the *Enquiry* after it, with Sincerity; and hold it faſt with Conſtancy: neither of which He can do, if He is overpowered by the *Motives* of this *World*; and by the ſame Arguments, which equally recommend *Truth* and *Faiſhood*; and

S E R M. which therefore, would have had the same Effect upon his Mind and Tongue, were any *certain Error*, by the like Pain and Distress, recommended to Him.

Nay, upon this Account it is not unreasonable to affirm, That it would be more justifiable of the two, to erect a *Court of Inquisition*, and to apply the *Extremity* of Bodily Torments, for the Conviction of All who will not own that *a Part is greater than the Whole*, or that *Ten are more than Twenty*; than to make use of the same *Terrors*, in Matters purely *Religious*, that touch the *Worship* and *Service* of God, according to Men's own Consciences. The *former* is monstrous, and absurd, and an Injury to *Human Society*. The *latter* is as monstrous and absurd; and besides, is a profane *Invasion* of Almighty God's Province; a Judging his Servants before the Time; an Insult upon *Conscience*, which is to be the Rule, and Measure, of a Man's Duty here, and of his *Happiness* hereafter.

Since therefore, to force the *Mind* and *Conscience* within, is impossible; and since to force the Words and Professions of Men, against their Inward Persuasion, is impious and wicked; and since this is much more so, where *God's Prerogative*, and *Man's Greatest Interest*, are concerned, in the most peculiar manner: it remains

remains that the only Method in this Case, S E R M.
 allowed by Justice, or Equity, is, the Use of x.
 Reason and Argument to convince Men in-
 wardly of any Errors; and that All the rest
 must be left to Charity, and mutual Forbear-
 ance. There are *Two* Arguments, to prove
 This, and to inforce it upon all Men, and
Christians. The *One* is taken from the Sen-
 timents of all Men, when they make it, or
 rather feel it, to be their own Case: and the
other is, what ought to be constantly regarded
 by All who bear the Name of *Christ*, the Me-
 thod in which *Christianity* was propagated
 through the World.

1. As to the *first* of these; there is no Rule
 allowed to be more equitable, or more humane
 and fitting, than this, that what one Man hath
 reason to expect from another, He is obliged
 in Reason to perform to that other, in like
 Circumstances. If we cannot think it just in
 Others, in *their* Height of Power, to demand
 an Agreement in every Thing relating to Re-
 ligion, of *Us*, supposing us under their Power;
 no more can we think it just in *Us*, to exact,
 with worldly Penalties, that same Agreement,
 whenever Superiority, and Strength, give leave:
 Because *Force* is not *Right*; nor can any
 Thing be done lawfully by one Man, which
 may not as lawfully be done by Another, in the
 same

SERM. same Circumstances. So that Men perpetual-
 X. ly pronounce, in this Case, their own Sentence
 of Condemnation, by asserting and pronouncing
 That to be the Height of Injustice and Wick-
 edness towards themselves; which yct They
 will venture too often to practice towards
 Others, upon every the least Opportunity. It
 is not only a Law of the Christian Religion,
 but of eternal Truth, *Whatsoever ye would*
(whatsoever You have reason to expect) that
Men should do unto you, That do unto them; and
 never the contrary.

2. But then, as I observed, there is something
 so peculiar to *Christians*, in the Propagation of
 their own Religion, in its first and pure State,
 that it deserves to be duly considered. The
 great Debate, We see, lies, between two Ways
 of promoting and supporting, what is called
Religion; or extending the Bounds of a *Church*.
 These are, either *Force*, or *Persuasion*: either
 the Argument of *Reason*, or of *outward Evil*.
 Here then, we shall find, which was most
 agreeable to the Wisdom of God. It was,
 with respect to his Power, equal to Him
 which Method to make use of. Had He seen
 fit to have illuminated and converted the Prin-
 ces and Magistrates of this World, (as He did
St. Paul) this, according to some, would have
 done the Work effectually. The *Authority* of
 such


such Men, besides the Influence of their Ex-
 amples, which there is a natural Inclination in
 Mankind to imitate, would immediately have
 drawn into the *Church*, the numerous Throng
 that is always seen to follow Power and Great-
 ness. Nay, Multitudes of Lives might probably
 have been saved this way; because no *Persecu-*
tion of this *new Religion* could have been set
 on Foot, when all Power was with it; but
 would have been applied, on the side of it, if
 a few (which is not credible,) should have
 been so unmannerly, or so stubborn, as not to
 follow Great Examples. But then, the whole
 End of the *Gospel* had been well nigh frustrat-
 ed; which was not, a bare Profession of it;
 but a receiving it as the *Truth*, in the Love of
Truth, and the not holding it in *Unrighteous-*
ness. Where would then have been the Trial
 of Men's Hearts and Souls? Where would
 have been the Proofs of Sincerity and Integri-
 ty in it's *Professors*? Where would have been
 Virtue and Honour, in following what was
 their great and lasting Profit?

Almighty God, therefore, who sees the
 Springs and Ground of all praise-worthy Acti-
 ons, chose a Method the direct contrary, for
 the Honour of the *Gospel*, and of the first Pro-
 fessors of it. He not only did *not* cloath it at
 first, in the Garments of this World's Glory;

SERM. not only did *not* arm it with any of the Force
 x. and Might of this State; but He left it to the

Power of those Evidences that accompanied it:
 And, that *Sincerity* might have it's *perfect*
Work, He opened it, when all the World was
 disposed to arm against it; not only not to
 cherish or befriend it, but to persecute and
 oppress it. So that here is the Difference be-
 tween the *Sentiments* of Man, and of Almighty
 GOD. Weak *Man* never seems to think
 even the *Religion* of God's *own Institution* safe,
 unless it have Persecution, and worldly Power,
 in it's Friendship and Alliance. And the All-
 wise God judges so differently from this, that,
 in the Settlement and Establishment of the
 Religion of *Christ*, he chuseth to have the
 Power of this World against it, rather than
 for it. The Reason is, that *this* World may
 have as little to do with Men's Determinations
 about *Religion*, as possible; that the Upright-
 ness of the Heart may lay the Foundation;
 and that Virtue may have it's Effect here, and
 it's Reward hereafter.

This, methinks, should convince all *Christi-
 ans*, that *Persecution*, in any Degree, is the
 Invention and Instrument of God's greatest
 Enemy: and that, as *Christ* disdain'd to make
 use of *outward Force*, in planting the *Best Reli-
 gion* in the World; so it is Unchristian and
 Impious

Impious to change his Method, in supporting S E R M.
 It; and for this Purpose, to chuse Those very X.
Weapons, which his *Enemies* used at first *against* 
 Him, and his *Kingdom*: and which, his Father,
 in his infinite Wisdom, rejected, as improper
 for the good *End*, He then had in view.

We may now, at the Conclusion of this Discourse, very justly ask, If all this be true, according to the Law of *Nature*, and the *Gospel* of *Jesus Christ*; how great, how inexpressibly great, is the Guilt of the Leaders of *that Church*, which places the whole Strength of Religion in the Strength of Power, and the Arm of *Flesh*; which turns the Motives of all that is good, from *inward* to *outward*; which hath no Care or Concern about *Honesty* and *Integrity*, but enforceth an *Unity* of *Voices*, by *Fires*, *Banishments*, *Racks*, and such like *Methods*; which forsakes the Paths of *Meekness* plainly pointed out by *God* and *Christ*, and pursues those of *Desolation*, and *Destruction*? And then, Let us consider, how much it behoves All who have professed to separate from that Church, to separate effectually from the most *Unchristian* and *Diabolical* Thing in it; and to keep themselves at a Distance from every Tendency to the same *Evil*: to study the *Gospel*, and to put on that Spirit of *Charity*,
 of

SERM. of Peace, and of Forbearance, which breathes
 X. through *Every Page* of it. And This will ef-
 ~~~~~fectually dispose them, not to judge, or censure;  
 much more, not to condemn and injure, op-  
 press and torment, the Servants of *Another*  
*Master*: but to leave their Fellow-Servants,  
 in all Matters of *Religious Concern*, to stand or  
 fall, by the Judgment of their one common  
 Lord and Master, to whom alone They must  
 all give an Account for Themselves.

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Of ZEAL not according to KNOW-  
LEDGE.

S E R M O N XI.

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ROM. X. 2.

*I bear them record, that they have a Zeal of  
GOD, but not according to Knowledge.*

**Z**EAL, (in the usual Acceptation, of the S E R M.  
Word, and as it may be understood in XI.  
most Places of Scripture,) is a great and  
Sincere Concern of the Mind for any Thing.  
And a *Zeal of God*, is a fervent Concern of  
the Mind, founded upon a *Religious* Principle;  
a Concern for something which a Man thinks  
of Importance to the Honour, or Worship, of  
God. But the true Notion of *Religion*, and of  
the *Honour* of God, has been so little known  
in the World; and Superstitious and fond  
Opinions about his Will, and his Worship,  
have taken such Root in the Hearts of Man-  
kind,

S E R M. kind, and been propagated so from Age to  
 XI. Age; that the *Zeal* commonly observed in the  
 World, has been of more Prejudice to *true Religion*, and the *Honour of God*, than the greatest Indifference and Coldness could have been. So ready human Nature has always been to mistake, in such weighty Matters; and to turn the *Virtues* and *Duties* of *Religion* into *Vices*, by their Misunderstandings, and the undue Management of their Passions.

A *Zeal* of *God* is, in itself, a reasonable and commendable Thing. But when Men mistake in the first Principles, and great Fundamentals of *Religion*; and fix upon the Deity whom they worship Such Attributes and Qualities as are agreeable to their own Fancies or Inclinations; all that they act is out of the right Way: and their *Zeal* degenerates into a superstitious Fury, and a mere Madness; being not guided by Reason, nor built upon a true Understanding of the Nature of *Religion*. Thus *St. Paul* observes, in the Text, that the *Jews*, even whilst they rejected and persecuted *Christianity*, and adhered to Justification by their own *Law*, had a Religious *Zeal*: but He observes, also, that it was *not according to Knowledge*; not accompanied with Understanding, or built upon a right Apprehension of Matters.

And

And that We, whilst we have a *Zeal* of SERM.  
*God*, and a Concern for what we account *Reli-* XI.  
*gion*, may not fall into the same Condemna-  
 tion; it will be proper for Us to spend some  
 Thoughts upon this Subject. And, in order  
 to do this with Advantage, I propose these  
 following Things :

I. To shew When it is that a Religious  
*Zeal* is *not according to Knowledge*.

II. To lay down the best Rule I can, for  
 regulating *our Religious Zeal*.

III. To offer some *Motives*, in order to our  
 avoiding that *Religious Zeal*, which is *not accord-*  
*ing to Knowledge*.

I. I shall endeavour to shew When it is  
 that a Religious *Zeal* is *not according to Know-*  
*ledge*. And, I think, this may be determined,  
 1. By the *Degree* of our *Zeal*, which ought  
 always to be proportioned to the Value of the  
 Object of it. 2. By the *Methods* in which it  
 shews itself. And 3. By the *Motives* which  
 give Life to it.

I. A *Religious Zeal* is *not according to Know-*  
*ledge*, when the *Object* of it is not what it  
 ought to be. Nay, It is Absurd and Foolish;  
 a Contradiction to All Reason and Under-  
 standing; when is employed upon what does

SERM. not deserve any Part of our Regard. As We  
 XI. are made Reasonable Creatures, We are obliged  
 to act as Such. And therefore, When Men regulate and fettle their *Religious Zeal*, for their own private Conduct, which is a Matter of great Moment to them; it ought to be done with the most mature Deliberation, and upon the best Grounds; with Regard to nothing, but what is of real Weight in the Balance of Reason, and of the *Gospel*. Otherwise, They may unhappily come to lay out the Strength and Vigour of their Souls upon what cannot profit them; upon what cannot carry forward the great Affair of their Salvation in another World; and to found their warmest Expectations of God's Favour, and Happiness, upon insignificant Trifles. And then, All their Concern for them; the more Vigorous and Passionate it is, the more Absurd it will be also. It may be a *Religious Zeal*, indeed: but it will be, *not according to Knowledge*, or Understanding.

And as the *Degree* of our *Zeal* ought to be proportioned by the Value of it's several *Objects*; it is evident That Our *Religious Zeal* is not *according to Knowledge*, when We shew *more Zeal* for some Matters of Little Consideration, than we do for Those of much more Moment, and of greater Importance to us. All Men who believe any

Thing of Religion, (and none but such can pretend to any Thing of a *Religious Zeal*;) cannot but acknowledge that the main Design of it, and the strong *Lines of moral Duty*, to which it always tends, are the Matters of greatest Concernment to them. This, I am sure, our *Saviour* has plainly taught all *Christians*: and yet, the *Zeal* of Men, and even of *Christians*, which has most appeared in the World, has been seen to exert itself, as if *These* were framed to yield to Points of much less Consideration. The Honour of God, in the Sanctification of Men's Lives, has been too much neglected; the Terms of *Salvation*, proposed by God himself, both in his Book of *Reason*, and That of *Revelation*, have been overlooked. Other Terms have been invented; other Supports for Men's Hopes and Expectations sought out: and a much greater Stress laid upon some Circumstances, which are, comparatively, trifling and insignificant, than upon what God has *plainly* declared to be of the greatest Importance.

But, certainly, We act not agreeably to that Character of understanding Creatures, which we pretend to, when we put off the great and momentous Points of *Religion*, with a very small Part of our *Zeal*; and employ the main Force of it upon something of much less Con-

SE R M. sideration: when we express a very cold Affection, and little Warmth, for Righteousness, and Justice, and Temperance, Truth, and Honesty, and Integrity; but have a burning *Zeal* for some particular outward Forms, or inward Opinions; or for the Enlargement of the worldly Interest of a particular *Seēt*; none of which can come in Competition with Those greater Matters, which True Religion strictly and principally requires.

2. Our religious *Zeal* is, certainly, then *not according to Knowledge*, when it shews itself by undue *Methods*, and is discovered after an indecent and unchristian Manner. Let the *Objects* of our religious Concern be what They will, and what they ought to be; let the *Degree* of this inward Concern be, according to the Rules of Equity, proportionable to the *Objects*; yet there is something more requisite: It must not break forth into *Indecencies*, or *do Evil that Good may come*. We cannot be too much concerned for the Honour of God, and the Conversion of the World from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan to the living God. But the aiming at the Service of God himself, will not justify all the Means we may possibly use, in our great Concern for it. *Zeal* for God, and his Glory, must not break in upon any of the Laws which He himself has



has laid down, in order to his own Glory: for S E R M.  
 this would be to affront Him, in order to ho- XI.  
 nour him; and to bring a Disgrace upon his  
 Religion, in order to propagate and extend it.  
 And therefore, When the *Zeal* of any Persons  
 for what they account Religion, breaks forth  
 into Reproaches and Calumnies, Murthers and  
 Destructions, Violences and Passions, Invasions  
 of Rights and Privileges, and the like; or,  
 when *Zeal* for Religion discovers itself in any  
 Thing contrary to the known Laws of that  
 same Religion; so that Virtue itself suffers,  
 in any of its Branches: it is apparent that This  
 is a *Zeal of God, not according to Knowledge*;  
 being founded upon the Ignorance of what  
 God expressly requires; and proceeding from  
 Men's not knowing, or not regarding, the eter-  
 nal Laws of Practice, which God himself has  
 proposed to Mankind. And of such Persons  
 as These, the Apostle, in another Place of this  
 Epistle, says, *whose Damnation is just.*

3. *Lastly*, When the *Motives* that give Life  
 and Vigour to our *Religious Zeal* are worldly  
 and Evil; then our *Zeal* is *not according to*  
*Knowledge*, nor begun, and carried on, by Rea-  
 son and Understanding. This *one* Thing will  
 spoil the Best of all our Actions, and will cer-  
 tainly ruine the Beauty and Acceptableness of our  
*Zeal* in the Eyes of God. To express a Warm

S E R M. *Zeal* for *Him*, and for his Honour, and His  
 XI. Commands, above all other Things; and  
 to shew this Zeal in proper and becoming  
*Methods*; *These* are very laudable and Christian  
 Points. But to exert this *Zeal* upon Temporal  
 Considerations, and for some vile End of our  
 own, undiscovered to the World, renders the  
 whole Procedure odious to God; even when  
 there is Nothing bad in it, but the *Principles*,  
 upon which Men act. For God sees the  
 Heart and the Reins; and is intimately ac-  
 quainted with every Thought in Man. He  
 delights in *Sincerity*. And though *That* will  
 cover many an Imperfection in his Eyes,  
 yet, Nothing can atone before Him, for the  
 Want of *That*. And it is the Highth of  
*Ignorance*, for any understanding Creature not  
 to know this: and, if it be known, it is the  
 Highth of *Assurance*, to think to impose up-  
 on Almighty God with the outward Appear-  
 ance, or Mask, of *Zeal* for his Name.

That *religious Zeal*, which alone He can  
 look upon with Delight, must be founded upon  
 an inward Sense of the Importance of *Religion*.  
 But if there be all the Outside and Pomp of  
*Zeal* imaginable; and this be founded upon  
 mere *worldly* Considerations, and be expressed  
 only to carry forward some *temporal* End; it is  
 absurd to think, that God can approve of it;

or that this is such a *Religious Zeal*, as it becomes an understanding Creature to have. Actions materially good and praise-worthy, are rendered vicious and evil by the *Motives* that give the first Spring to them. From whence it follows, that, though a *Zeal for God* and Religion, be, in itself, worthy of Commendation and Reward; yet, when it is built upon Considerations taken from this World only, and not upon a due Sense of Religion heartily embraced within, it becomes a *vicious Zeal*, a *Zeal* unacceptable to God; as it is not only *not according to Knowledge*, but absolutely inconsistent with it. Thus have I endeavoured to shew, when it is, that a *Religious Zeal* may be said to be *not according to Knowledge*: which was the *First Thing* I proposed.

But, before I proceed any farther, I desire to put in a *Caution*, That I would not be understood, by any Thing I have said, under this first Head, to intimate That a great *Regard* was not due to Those *Performances* appointed by our Lord, in his *Religion*, which, compared with Some *Others*, may justly be esteemed of *less Importance*. For I know Who has said, *These Ye ought to do, and not to leave the Others undone*. But what I have offered on this Subject, I intended to this Purpose, that We should not fix our *Zeal* upon these *lesser Matters*, more than upon Those which God him-

S E R M. self has with a greater Concern recommended to  
 XI. us: and that We should, much less, discover a  
 greater *Zeal* about the Differences in Opinion and  
 Worship, amongst *Christians*, not plainly deter-  
 mined in the *Gospel*, than for the more impor-  
 tant Duties expressly commanded in it: for this  
 is, certainly, a *Zeal not according to Knowledge*.

When the Duty of *Sacrifice*, under the *Law*,  
 came in Competition with the Duty of *Charity*  
 and *Mercy*, our *Lord* himself observed, out of  
 one of the *Prophets*, that *God required Mercy,*  
*and not Sacrifice*. And so, when any Moral  
 Duty comes in Competition with an in-  
 stituted Rite, we know, by this Rule, (con-  
 firmed by our blessed *Lord*,) which is to give  
 Place. This Preference shews that the One is,  
 of itself, of greater Value; and therefore, Rea-  
 son will direct us to have *more Zeal* for it.

So likewise, it is certainly lawful for Us to be  
 concerned for any Practice, Opinion, or Notion,  
 relating to Religion, which we ourselves think  
 True, and of Importance; and to shew this  
 Concern by all Christian Methods; nay, to en-  
 deavour to convince Others of the Reasonable-  
 ness of complying with it. But it is a wretched  
 Absurdity to make the Obligation to this Com-  
 pliance, of equal Importance to Mankind, with  
 their Obligation to Righteousness and Holiness;  
 and much more So, to shew a greater Heat and  
 Concern,

Concern, in order to make Men all of one S E R M.  
 Mind, and one Opinion, than in order to make XI.  
 Them holy, and just, and charitable. Having  
 just mentioned this *Caution*, I now proceed to the  
*next* Thing I proposed; which was,

II. To lay down the best *Rule* I can, for regulating our *Religious Zeal*.

This is certain, that it is our Duty to have a *Zeal* for God, and for *Religion*. But it is our Duty also, as certainly, to take effectual Care that it be a *Zeal according to Knowledge*; lest otherwise it should flame out, to the Prejudice and Dishonour of Religion itself, and of that God in whose Service it pretends to burn. The Best and only Rule, I can think of, is, that we must take all possible Care to fix in our Minds just and true Notions of the Nature of God, and of the great Design of *Christianity*. For, as the fundamental Error of Men, in this important Matter, has been the forming to Themselves the falsest Notions of the *Nature* of Almighty God, and of the *End* of the *Gospel* itself; and, as this Error has given the sad Occasion to all their Madness, under the Covert of a godly Zeal: So, the *Rule* I have mentioned must be the most proper to prevent, or cure, this great *Evil*.

When Men have been so foolish, as to imagine that God is pleased, and served, and worshipped,

SERM. shipped, as He ought to be, by little and  
 XI. trifling Ceremonies; nay, by absurd Rites,  
 and ridiculous Offices of Devotion; (as many  
 have brought themselves to think,) They naturally lay out all their Strength, and employ all the Bent of their Minds, to establish and propagate these; and stick not, at last, to destroy All that stand in the Way of their Fancies. Indeed, the chief Agents of this Sort, in the World, are, I believe, too wise to be persuaded themselves of the Truth of what they pretend to Others. But many, who serve under them, in the Prosecution of their Ends, think that all they are doing, let it be never so bad, is necessary for the Honour and Service of Almighty God, and his true Religion; and therefore, lawful. But if we would not Ourselves be of the Number of Those whose Zeal is a Dishonour to God; we must take Care to know what that God is, whom we serve; what his Nature and Attributes are; what his Will and Pleasure is; and what the End of his making Mankind capable of regarding it, and living according to it.

Nothing can be of more Service to us, in the Matter now before Us, than This, which I am now recommending to you. Supposing, what is certain, that We shall find, upon Inquiry, that God, the great Lord whose Servants we are, is a God of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; that

that He is merciful, just, and holy, to an infinite Degree; that he cannot hate any of his Creatures; that he wishes, and designs their Happiness; that he made them to know, and worship, and serve Him, in the Practice of all Virtue; that he reveled his Will to them, by his Son, in order to teach them more effectually to live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present World; and by This to bring them to all Happiness in another, and better State: Supposing, I say, a serious Person made truly sensible of this; Is it possible for him to think of honouring God any otherwise, than by the Practice of what he knows to be pleasing to him? Or, to pursue any thing in the whole World, with a *Zeal* comparable to That, with which he presses after what He knows to be the *Will* of that God? Can such a Man ever suffer himself to transgress the plain Laws of God, in order to promote his Honour? to be cruel and barbarous, in order to carry forward the Glory of his *merciful Father*? to be unjust and uncharitable, to shew his Zeal for the God of all Right, and the Father of all Mercies? Or, to be ill-natured to all the World about him, in order to propagate the most peaceable and best-natured Institution in the World?

I hope, as far as the Nature of the Thing itself can go, I may be justified in answering,

That

SERM.


XI.

That such a Conduct is next to impossible. *He*, who sincerely inquires into the Attributes of Almighty God, cannot easily suffer himself to act any thing contrary to that Nature and those Attributes. *He*, who seriously looks into the Christian Religion, will not easily think that any Thing, which contradicts the very Design of that Religion, can be acceptable to Him who instituted it. *He*, who sees how great a Stress is laid in the *Gospel*, upon Holiness, and Mercy, and Peace, can never be induced, under Pretense of the Honour of *Christ*, or his Church, to disregard the Practice of *these*, even for one Day. Nor can *He*, Who ever once thought in earnest about Religion, be brought to imagine it to be a praiseworthy Practice to serve the Cause of it by vicious and immoral Actions.

There is nothing therefore, more likely to fix our *Zeal* upon its true Object; and to fix it in the greatest *Degree* upon what most deserves it; to keep it from discovering itself in all *Methods* disapproved and condemned by Religion; and to rectify the Principles and *Motives* which give Life to it; than the Study of the Nature of God, and the Design of *Christianity*. I hope, upon the whole, I may conclude, That, if Men would study the *Book of Reason*, and the *Gospel* of *Christ*, seriously, They could not possibly entertain, or shew forth, any *Religious Zeal*, but  
what



what is *according to Knowledge*. I shall now proceed,

SERM.  
XI.  


III. To offer some *Motives*, in order to our avoiding such a *Religious Zeal*, as is *not according to Knowledge*. And to excite us to the well-regulating our *Religious Zeal*, it will be very proper to consider,

1. The Reasonableness, and excellent Usefulness, of *Religious Zeal*, when it is duely regulated. It is not left to our Choice, whether we will have a *Zeal for God*, and *Religion*, or not; but it is our Duty to form and nourish it in ourselves: and such a Duty as we cannot but practice, and effectually compass, if we heartily set about it. To have a *Zeal for God*, is to have a warm and affectionate concern for a Being to whom we have innumerable Obligations; who is the proper Object of all our Hopes, and Desires, and Expectations; and who has all possible Claims to our whole Service. And to have a *Zeal for the Substantials of Religion*, is to have a great Regard for what deserves it more than all other Things in the World; for what is truly pleasing to our Lord and Master, and can never be otherwise; for what is essentially necessary to the Happiness of human Society here below, and to our own eternal Reward hereafter.

It

SERM. It is just and becoming, therefore, to  
 XI. have a *Zeal*, and hearty Concern, for this great  
 and important Business of *Religion*. And, to  
 have this *Zeal* so directed, as to pursue its End  
 by none but proper and Religious *Methods*; by  
 Nothing but what Reason and God himself  
 recommend; is, to consult the true Honour of  
 Religion, and the Service of that God who  
 requires it of Us. No Scandal is brought, by  
 such a Conduct, upon our Profession: but every  
 Mouth blesses it. And then, to have this  
*Zeal* founded on the *Motives* of eternal Mo-  
 ment, the Rewards of Heaven, and the Im-  
 portance of Religion, and the Favour of God  
 and *Christ*, is to improve the Beauty and  
 Loveliness of it yet more. There can be no  
 Argument in the World, nor the least Sha-  
 dow of an Objection made, against a *Zeal*,  
 which has God, and the Practice of Religion,  
 for its Objects; which regards *These* more than  
 any Thing of lesser Consideration; which  
 discovers itself only in the Ways and Methods  
 recommended in the Gospel; and which works  
 upon no other Principles but what the Gospel  
 approves of. But, on the contrary,

2. Let us consider the Unreasonableness, and  
 the pernicious Consequences, of a *Religious*  
*Zeal*, not well-regulated; or, in the *Apostle's*  
*Words*, *not according to Knowledge*.

And

And here it is too obvious to Every Man's S E R M. Observation, that Nothing has done more XI. Mischief, or produced more lamentable Effects in the World, than this Sort of Zeal. It was this *Zeal* for the ceremonial Part of their Law, that kept the *Jews* from acknowledging our *Saviour*; nay, which induced Them to reject and crucify him. It was this *Zeal* for Matters of lesser Consideration, which, in very early Days, disunited the *Churches* of *Christ* from One Another; and in these *later* Ages, keeps up, with a fatal Heat, the Differences between the several Sorts of Disciples of *Christ*, in the World; and leads *Christians*, by degrees, to act against their Fellow-Christians, with a Spirit of *Fury*, and wicked Persecution. It is this *Zeal* without *Knowledge*, and the Discovery of it in an undue and unchristian Manner, which has prejudiced many against the very Name of *Christ*; and made the glad Tidings of Salvation a *Scandal* to Unbelievers.

But though it appears (as we have seen it to be, in the first Part of this Discourse,) so unreasonable, in itself; and has proved so pernicious to the Cause of true Religion in the World; Yet, it has always had a Multitude of *Votaries*, who have loved and entertained it *Themselves*; and who have abused and persecuted *Others*, who have not shewn their Zeal in  
the

SERM. the same severe, and inhuman *Methods*. Nothing  
 XI. could be of worse Consequence to the *Jews*, than  
 this *blind Zeal* for their *Ceremonial Law* : and yet  
 Nothing was in more Repute amongst them.  
 And They who had it not ; They, who believed  
 that *Sacrifice* was of *less* Value than *Mercy*, or  
 moral Duties of greater Moment than Ceremo-  
 nies ; or the Salvation of the whole World of  
 greater Concern than their Rites and Forms of  
 Religion ; were accounted false and perfidious ;  
 treated with Contempt, exposed and affronted,  
 excommunicated, and banished from Society.  
 And They have been followed, in this Path of  
 Uncharitableness, ever since, in all Ages and  
 Countries, by Such as have followed them in  
 their *Zeal not according to Knowledge*.

But, One of the *Worst* Consequences of this,  
 I must not omit ; because it is to be found where-  
 ver this *blind Zeal* is, even in the lowest De-  
 gree ; That it naturally brings in, wherever  
 it is universally embraced, an universal Neg-  
 lect of the great and substantial Parts of *Prac-  
 tical Religion*. For when Men's Thoughts and  
 Hearts are taken up with the Shadows of Things,  
 and all their Heat and Vigour spent upon these ;  
 They have no Time, or Zeal, left for the greater  
 Matters of the *Gospel*. Nay, it is often seen,  
 that, when They are most possessed with a *Zeal*  
 for

for the lesser Matters and Appendages of Religion, They are most of all apt to forget the sacred Laws of Practice, and to transgress the Rules laid down in that very Religion which, they think They are propagating.

S E R M.  
XI.  
~~~~~

There cannot be any *Consideration* of more Weight with *Christians*, in the present Case, than This, That *where* the greatest Heat and Concern are expressed about the insignificant Circumstances of Religion, *there* the *essential* Parts of it are seen most to be neglected, in the Lives, and whole Behaviour, of the Professors of it. What *Christian* will not be moved to discourage, and put what Check He can, to a Fire, which may, too probably, burn to the Destruction of all that is valuable in that Religion itself, in whose Cause alone it pretends to burn?

It is, I confess, a melancholy Consideration, that some of the best *Qualities* and *Affections* of the Mind, so easily degenerate into accursed and wicked Passions; and tend, in their Corruption, to the Ruine of the best and most important Things in the World. But this should excite our most serious Consideration; and induce us to make the great Strokes of *Practical Religion* the chief *Objects* of our *Zeal*; and to resolve to shew this Zeal by Those Methods only,

Q

which


SER M. which the Gospel recommends to Us, as much
 XI. as it doth this *Zeal* itself. And then, We may
 be secure from falling under the Censure of the
 Apostle, in the Text, of *having a Zeal not
 according to Knowledge*; and not only of This,
 but of pleasing *Almighty God*, by placing our
Zeal where it ought to be placed; by regulat-
 ing it agreeably to his Nature and Perfections:
 And so, at last, may inherit the Reward of
 that *Faith* and *Obedience*, which we have not
 defiled by a false, rash, and wicked, *Zeal*; or
 by pretending to carry forward the Honour of
 God, by such *Methods* as He himself abhors.

The Impossibility of serving GOD and
MAMMON.

S E R M O N XII.

LUKE xvi. 13.

No Servant can serve two Masters: for either He will hate the one, and love the other; or else He will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve GOD and MAMMON.

IN these Words our *Blessed Lord* supposes, S E R M.
and represents, all Men who have it in XII.
their Power to come to the Knowledge 
of the Supreme GOD, as tied and bound to
Him, in the Relation of *Servants*. This being
the Supposition; in order to convince his Followers
of the great Unreasonableness of pretending
to be the *Servants* of God, and yet to be the
Servants, together with *Him*, of an opposite
Q 2 Master,

S E R M. Master; Slaves to the *Riches*, or Grandeur, of
 XII. *this World*; Our Lord useth an Illustration
 taken from common Life. *No Servant* amongst
 Men *can* possibly *serve two Masters*, that is,
two Masters, with different and opposite Wills;
 of contrary Tempers, and contrary Resolutions.
 For it will be either thus, that the Servant
 will have a much greater inward Affection, and
 Kindness, for *one* of them than for the *other*: Or,
 supposing that He can inwardly *love* them
 both equally; yet the Nature of their Com-
 mands, and separate Interests, is such, that He
 must often, whilst He is obeying the one, or
holding to the one, as the Text expresseth it,
despise, that is, *neglect* the Commands of the
Other. The *first* Affirmation is, that He can-
 not be supposed to *love* them both equally, so
 as to be attached to their Interests equally in
 his inward Affection, and Inclination: the *se-
 cond* Affirmation is, that, supposing him to
love them both equally, yet, in the Execution
 of their contrary Commands, He must un-
 avoidably *neglect*, or *despise*, the one, whilst
 He *holds to*, or obeys, the other. From this
 Instance of a *Servant* amongst Men, pretending
 in vain to *serve two Masters*, opposite in their
 Interests, and their Wills, Our Lord argues,
 and assures his Followers, That it is so, with
 respect to *God*, and *Riches*, here represented as
 a *Person*,

a *Person*, or *false God*, set up as a *Master*, in Opposition to the *true God*. Ye cannot serve the true GOD, and *Mammon*; that is, *Riches*, or the imaginary *God of Wealth*. SERM. XII.

If you would now see the Force of our Lord's *Argument*, extended, as it ought to be, to other Points, as well as *Riches*; it may be comprehended in these three Propositions. "You are all obliged by the strongest Ties, and the most unanswerable Reasons, to be faithful and sincere *Servants* of the true GOD, to whom You owe Yourselfes, and all you have, and all You can hope for." Now, as it is impossible, amongst Men, for a *Servant* to serve two opposite Masters, either affectionately, or faithfully; so, it is impossible for You to be the *Servants* of the fictitious *God* of this World, and to serve the *true God* faithfully, at the same Time. "Therefore, you are obliged, if you would serve God, as you ought, to renounce to the Service of every *other Master*, opposite to him, in Interest, and in Will." From the Text, thus explained, I shall take occasion to discourse of several Particulars, not foreign to the plain Design of the Words; nor useless to *Christians* of these *later Ages*.

I. I shall observe that many Persons, who have naturally good Dispositions, and, frequently holy and warm Resolutions, please themselves

SERM. with dividing their Services between God,
 XII. and Something opposite to Him; and entertain a foolish Opinion that this Conduct is a secure way to his Favour.

II. I shall observe to you how unreasonable, and how useless, this Division of their Service is; and how ill-grounded and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon such a Service.

III. I shall endeavour to dissuade you from all such Service to Any thing in this World, as will make it impossible for you to perform the Service that is indispensably due to God. And,

IV. I shall conclude with a proper Application, concerning the Reasonableness, the Honour, the Advantage, and true Glory, of that Service which we owe to Almighty God.

I. I shall observe, that many Persons, who have good Dispositions, and frequently holy and warm Resolutions, often please Themselves with *dividing* their Services between *God*, and something opposite to Him; and entertain a foolish Opinion that, by thus halving their Behaviour, They are in a secure Way, and *truly* his Servants. For it being so, that *Religion* hath been taught them, and the plain Doctrines

trines of it inculcated upon them from their Childhood; and That, notwithstanding all the Allurements, or Terrors, of the World, *Virtue* hath still its peculiar Attractions, and Advantages; and that the Prospect, or even Suspicion, of God's Anger and future Punishment, is very terrible, and to some Minds intolerable: These Things, I say, being so; many Persons find it impossible to root out of their Minds all Regard to *Religion*. They experience a Reluctance in their Consciences, when they attempt it; and this Reluctance gives them so much Uneasiness, as rather determines them to set about some *Part* of the Work of *Religion*, than to neglect the *Whole*. They cannot bear the Thoughts of being totally cast off by Almighty God; and of forfeiting all possible Title to Heaven and Happiness; and of incurring certainly his Wrath and Displeasure. These Things they cannot think of with any Ease; nor can they bring their Consciences to sit down quiet under the Apprehension of them.

But then, on the other hand, perhaps their natural Inclination leads them strongly to some particular Vice, or other: Perhaps Custom has improved this Inclination, before they were enough aware of it: Perhaps, it brings them in a great deal of present *Profit*, and *Advantage*;

^S E R M. or it procures them a great deal of *Pleasure*; or
 XII. Honour, and Pomp, may attend upon it.

These Things are so entertaining, and bewitching, to some particular Minds, and Tempers, that Men are not able to bear the Thought of parting, effectually and entirely, with what procures them so much present Satisfaction. When their Minds are employed upon the Excellency and Beauty of Religion, and the good Consequences of serving God truly; and are a little at Leisure from the close Attacks of any thing of this World; then perhaps, they may come to a Resolution of forsaking all for God, and a good Conscience; and be vain enough to think that Nothing shall move them from such Resolutions. But when the Season of *Trial* comes again; and the Temptation presents itself to Them, in all its Force: They begin to think more favourably of the Matter; and to imagine it no mortal Crime, to be influenced by it; and to give Proofs, by their Weakness, that they are Men.

This being their Case, between the Motions of Conscience, and God's Commands, on one hand, and the Temptations of Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, on the other; They at last are seen to come, with Calmness and a Sort of Serenity of Mind, to divide themselves between *this* World and the *other*: between the *true* God, and the

Idol God of this State; and to procure themselves a Sort of Ease, by performing Part of that *Service* which they owe to Almighty God, (and This, to be sure, will be the Part that They themselves happen to like best) whilst at the same Time they never lose the View of what they propose to themselves in this vain World. All indeed do not give up themselves to the same Masters. Some you may see pursuing Pleasure to an immoderate Degree; others, ambitious beyond all Bounds; others, busying themselves in amassing Heaps of useles Wealth: and very many of these, in their Intervals, appearing before God, in publick Worship; calling themselves his Servants, and perhaps really thinking that they are so. But

II. I come now to observe to you how unreasonable, and how useles, this *Division* of their *Service* is: and how ill-grounded, and vain, all their Hopes are, which are founded upon such a Service.

And this will appear most evidently by considering, what the true *Service* of God is; and how much of our Hearts and Time it must unavoidably require. The great Mistake of Men seems to lye in their not knowing, or not attending to, the true Notion of God's Service. Were it so indeed, that to serve God
were

S E R M.
XII.

SERM. were nothing but to say our Prayers, to call
 XII. him Master, to attend upon his Ordinances,
 ~~~~~ to bow before him, to lift up our Hands and  
 Eyes, to confess our Sins, to beg his Blessing,  
 and to give him Thanks: were *This*, or the  
 like, all that is implied in serving God, then  
 it is very certain that we might divide Our-  
 selves, and give the World our Strength, and  
 our Heart, and our Practice, whilst we serve  
 God (as some call it) with our Lips, and our  
 Bodies. We might then certainly go, from our  
 Intemperance and our Luxury, to our Pray-  
 ers and Praises; we might come fresh from  
 cheating our Neighbours, and fall low before  
 the Footstool of our Master; we might come  
 from our Hoards of ill-gotten Possessions, and  
 be as loud, as the best of our Neighbours, in  
 calling God our Father, in professing our Faith  
 in him, and laying Ourselves before the Throne  
 of his Mercy.

But this Notion must be rooted out of Men's  
 Minds. This is what God complained of,  
 under the *Jewish* Dispensation. *This People*  
*draweth nigh to Me with their Lips, but their*  
*Heart is far from Me.* You see, the *Worst*  
 amongst that wicked and corrupted Generation  
 of Men, in which our *Saviour* appeared, put  
 on the greatest Shew of *Zeal* for God and his  
*Service.* Who such Zealots as *They*, to pay  
*Tithes;*

*Tithes*; to *fast*; to *pray*; and to do *many* other Things which belonged to their *Religion*? But what was this? or to what Purpose? Their Practice, their Hearts (which are discovered by Practice) were all another Way. *Mammon* was their true Master; because *They* were his true *Servants*. The *Service* they did to *Sin* was visible. The World about them felt the Effects of it: whilst they called that Form of *Religion*, the Service of God, which He assured them He abhorred and detested, when it was separated from that practical Service which He indispensably required.

For what is it, in which the *Service* of any Master upon Earth consists? Is it in the calling *Him*, our *Master*; or *Ourselves*, his *Servants*? Is it in a formal Attendance upon him, to receive his Commands, or merely to know his Pleasure? Is it a bare confessing of *Ourselves* guilty of transgressing his Will, and in a daily returning to ask his Pardon? Will any *Master* upon Earth acknowledge this to be *Service*? or, will any *Master* value, or regard a Man who behaves himself thus, as his *Servant*? Offer it now to any Man, and see if He will accept of such *Mock-Service*, as this. If *I* be a *Master*, saith God, by his Prophet, *where is my Service*? i. e. If I be *your Master*, as you pretend to call me, pay me the *Service* due to a *Master*:

SERM.  
XII.



SERMON. *ter* : Behave yourselves as that Relation, which  
 XII. you pretend to be between us, enjoins and demands.

It is the Part of a Servant to regard the Interest of his Master, as his own Interest; to consult the Honour of his Master, as his own Honour; and principally, which is the only Thing to judge by, to look upon his Master's Will, as far as a Master's Authority reacheth, as the Guide and Rule of his Actions. Now, if We apply this to Almighty God, and that Relation we stand in to Him, as *Servants*; we shall presently see how far the Service we owe him reacheth; how much of our Time, and how much of our Hearts, it must of necessity take up. The *Interest* of our great *Master* must be esteemed by Us, as our own Interest. Now, the Interest of our *Master* can be Nothing, but the Encrease of all that He approves of; and the Addition of as many Persons as possible, to his true Service. Our great *Master's Honour* is what we are obliged, as Servants, to consult and regard. And this lies likewise, in the Likeness of all understanding Natures to his moral Perfections; and in the advancing, as much as possible, the State of true Virtue in the World. And, what comprehends all, our great *Master's Will* must be made the Rule of all our Actions: for They are but  
 indifferent




indifferent Servants indeed, who do not pay S E R M.  
a constant and strict regard to the *Will* of their XII.  
*Masters*. Now, the *Will* of God is every Com-  
mand that he hath made known to Us, whe-  
ther by the Law of Nature, which is his Voice;  
or by the Law of Revelation, which is an open  
Confirmation of that first *Law*.

From hence, therefore, it appears that, un-  
der the *Service* of God, is comprehended the  
whole *System* of *moral* Virtues, as well as all the  
external Acts of Devotion and Worship. A  
*Part* of that *Service*, which we owe to him,  
is indeed, external Adoration; the Prayers, and  
Praises, of our Lips; and all the Expressions  
of Dependence upon *Him*, and universal *Love*  
to *Others*, which become such Creatures as we  
are. But *this* is but one *Part* of his *Service*;  
however it may have come to be called, in ge-  
neral, by that Name. Nay, if it do not proceed  
from the Heart and Soul; if the Mind and  
Thoughts do not sincerely accompany it, and  
direct it all, with due Affections and Sentiments,  
to Him; it is indeed no Part of his Service;  
but only so many Words pronounced, without  
Meaning; and so many Sounds, muttered over  
for *Form's* Sake, without any Effect either upon  
Him, or Ourselves. Nay, and supposing the  
Heart and Soul to go along with Us in these  
*outward* Exercises of our *Religion*; supposing  
Us

S E R M. Us to be sincere in *this* Part of God's *Service* ;  
 XII. and to confess, and pray, and praise, and in-  
 ~~~~~ tercede, with all the present Affection that  
 becomes the Attendance of such *Servants*. upon
 such a *Master* : yet, when this is done, This
 is but a *Part* of his *Service*.

There remains behind a large Field of *Vir-
 tue*. *Temperance*, and a Command of Our-
 selves, and all our Appetites ; *Charity*, or an
 unbounded Love to all the intelligent Creation ;
Justice, or a strict Regard to the Dues and
 Rights of all Mankind about us ; *Forgiveness*
 of the greatest, and most provoking Injuries,
 that can be offered us ; *Patience*, under all
 the *Evils* of Pain, Sicknes, Loss, Disappoint-
 ment, that come upon us by the Providence
 of our Master ; and *Contentment* in every Sta-
 tion, to which he is pleased to confine Us ; in
 a word, such a Behaviour and Conduct, in that
 Post in which our great *Master* placeth us, as
 becomes us, as *Servants*, and as is required
 by the Nature of it, whatever it be. All may
 be comprehended in the two great Command-
 ments, of *loving the Lord our God with all our
 Heart, and all our Mind, and all our Soul, and
 all our Strength* : and of *loving our Neighbours as
 Ourselves* : or may be summed up in St. Paul's
 comprehensive Expression of *living soberly* with
 Respect to ourselves ; *righteously*, with Respect
 to


to our Neighbour ; and *godlily*, with Respect S E R M.
to Almighty God, in this World. XII.

This being then the Task of God's *Servants*;  this being the Work which every one hath to do, that hath given up his Name to Him ; tell me now, Is there any room for *other Masters*, opposite or contrary to Him ? Can any Man *love God with all his Heart*, and yet love any Enemy to God with the least Degree of his Affection ; or the least Part of his Heart ? Can any Man, who hath such a Task marked out for him ; so many Virtues to excel in ; so many good Habits to implant in himself ; so many good Actions to fill up every Moment of his Time ; so strict a Regard to pay to the Honour of his great Master, and the Commands of such a Lord : Can any Man, I say, in these Circumstances, find any Opportunity, or the least Interval of Time, for the Service of other *contrary Masters* ; such, I mean, as direct Him to any Instances of that *Sin*, which is as opposite to the Will of GOD, as *Darkness* is to *Light* ? It is evident indeed, from the Nature of the Thing itself, that, in whatsoever Point we decline from his Service, we cease to *serve* him ; and that, as soon as we are drawn to *Sin*, we are no longer the *Servants of God*, but of his *Enemy*. For *know ye not*, saith the Apostle, *that to whom Ye yield yourselves Ser-*
vants

S E R M. *wants to obey, his Servants ye are, to whom Ye*
 XII. *obey.* And consequently, If You obey the
 Commands of GOD, You are the Servants of
 GOD: But if You obey Those of *Sin*, You are
 the *Servants* of Sin; and have departed from
 the Service of God. And the *Service* of God
 being the Practice of all *Righteousness*, in every
 Instance equally; it is impossible that You
 should at the same Time be the *Servants* of
 God, and yet transgress Any of the Rules of
 that *Righteousness*.

How vain therefore, and groundless, are the
Hopes of Those, who pretend to divide them-
 selves, and their *Services*, between God, and
this World; between Duty to this supreme Mas-
 ter, and any Sort of *Vice*; They themselves
 may see, by considering seriously what the
Service of God is: Not a Prayer, or a Tear,
 or an Act of Devotion; but a continued *Tenor*
 of good Works; a Progress and Improvement
 in all Virtue. This is a *Service*, which ad-
 mits of no Remission of Care and Diligence;
 and which can brook no Rival. And there-
 fore, the Man, whenever this is neglected,
 or broken into, immediately ceaseth to be the
Servant of that God, who cannot be truly served,
 unless He be served with the whole Heart.
 The Reasonableness of what hath been said
 under

this Head is so manifest, that it will make 3 ER M.
Way for what I next propos'd ; Which was XII.

III. To dissuade you from any such *Service* 
to Mammon, *i. e.* Riches, or any other Thing,
or Person, in the Universe, as will make
it impossible for you to perform that *Service*
which is indispensably due to GOD. For, it
having appeared plainly, that it is impossible
to serve, or obey, any Two Contrary and Op-
posite Masters ; and consequently, impossible
for the same *Man*, to be the Servant of *Mam-*
mon, and of GOD ; the only Question is, Which
of the two opposite *Masters*, who contend for
his *Service*, He shall chuse for his Lord and
Director : whether the True *God*, or the false
Gods of this World, *Pleasure*, *Profit*, or *Ho-*
nour, that set themselves up against *his* Right,
and in Opposition to *his* Will : for *One* or
Other of these, He must chuse.

Now, there is this, at first Thought, to be
said of the Service of God, that the greatest
Part of Those who are truly the Servants of
Mammon, or some other evil Principle, know
not how to throw off all Regard to their *right-*
ful Master ; but even, whilst they are *servi*ng
his *Enemy* truly, would gladly ever now
and then, return to the *Service* of God, in
some Instances, or other. By this They
themselves give a remarkable Testimony that

SER M. Almighty God hath a lasting, true, and certain, Title to their *Service*; whilst They cannot be easy in their Minds, without paying him *some* Sort of *Service*. On the other hand, all that the greatest Votaries of this World can say for that sincere *Service* they pay to their *other* Masters, is, that Inclination strongly leads them to it; that they hope it is not so bad as it seems to be; and that they design still, one time or other, to have due Regard to the *Service* of God, their true, and rightful Master. But how long will such Pretenses satisfy reasonable Creatures? Only long enough, to serve to make them miserable, when they come to see, too late, the Unhappiness of that *Service*, in which they have engaged themselves.

For this is the Case. Almighty God hath such a right to your Services, that is, to your Obedience to all his Laws, that, in the midst of your serving other Masters, you are forced often to recur to his Service, and to pretend to pay him some Sort of Obedience. Now, you have seen that this interrupted Obedience, this Half-duty, which is only so much as your other Lords, your Lusts and Passions, your Covetousness, or Luxury, will permit you to pay Him, is not truly *his Service*; and that you cannot pretend, by such a limited and broken Obedience,


Obedience, to prove yourselves his *Servants*.^{S E R M.}
Would you, therefore, be his Servants, so as ^{XII.}
to have that Reward which He hath promised
to his true and faithful *Servants*? There is an
absolute Necessity that you should immediately
come out of the *Chains* of other contrary
Lords; that you should break their Fetters;
and renounce every Degree of that *Service*,
which *Mammon*, or any Sort of evil Principle,
requires of you. For God's *Service* cannot be
his true Service, unless it be perfectly free from
all such Regard to any thing else in the World,
as is inconsistent with your constant Regard
to all *His* Laws. His *Service* never can be
easy to Yourselfes within, till You have thus got
rid of all the Influences of impetuous Inclination
to the Service of all contrary *Masters*: nor
can it be ever pleasing to Him, till it is that
uniform, sincere, unmixed, Obedience, which
He hath a right to, by all possible Titles.

On the other hand, consider what Title,
what Right, any other Thing in the World,
opposite to Him, hath to our Regards. What
do we owe to them? Are they the first Cau-
ses of our Beings? Are they the primary Oc-
casions of our Happiness? Will they, at the
End, stand us in stead, against the Attacks of
Adversity here, or the Displeasure of an offend-
ed God hereafter? Are they stable, unmovea-

SERM. ble, certain, unshaken, Goods? or, Are we
 XII. certain of always having them for our Com-
 ~~~~~forts and Supports? or, Are they not rather,  
 vain, imaginary, moveable, and transitory  
 Things; and we ourselves, hasting away with  
 a never ceasing Pace; till all Correspondence  
 with them is entirely interrupted, never to be  
 renewed again? And are such Things as These,  
 fit to be chosen for our *Masters*? or, Are we  
 of that Nature, as that it can become Us to  
 make ourselves their Servants? By no Means:  
 God, and Reason reclaim Us from all Ap-  
 proaches to such a *Service*; God, and Rea-  
 son, which are to Us infinitely more than all  
 the World besides.

If therefore we would have God for our  
*Friend*, we must chuse him first for our *Mas-*  
*ter*; and his Laws for the Rules of our *Ser-*  
*vice*. And if we would have our own Rea-  
 son, and Conscience, at Peace with Us; we  
 must act the Part to which they direct: and  
 that Part is ever the *Service* of that God, to  
 whom we owe ourselves. Whatever hinders  
 us from a constant Application of ourselves to  
 that *Service*; whatever opposeth us in it, or  
 would draw us off from it, is to be disregard-  
 ed, and cast from us with Courage and Con-  
 stancy. And, it being certain that the *Service*  
 of *Sin*, is utterly inconsistent with the *Service*



of God; it is certain, that if we would *serve* SERM. God, as we ought, in Duty and Interest, to do; We must first shake off all Regard to his XII. Enemy; we must, if we think of being his *Servants*, unto all Righteousness, shake off that *Yoke of Servitude* which *other Masters* would impose upon us. And if we be truly willing to do this, there will remain Nothing to hinder us from giving up ourselves to the true *Service* of GOD. 

IV. To this I shall now endeavour to persuade you, and so conclude. His Title, or *Right*, to this *Service*, is indisputable. He hath created us what we are. We owe to him all we have, and all we can ever enjoy; and the very Possibility of enjoying any thing. He hath bought us again into his Possession, by the Life and Death of his Son. To him we owe this fresh, and greater, Opportunity of making ourselves happy in his *Service*. And, how can we deny a *Service* due on so many, and so excellent, Accounts? The *Rules* of his *Service* are his Laws. by which He governs us, and to which he requires our Obedience. And these are *Reason*, and *Light*; the Transcripts of his own *moral Perfections*, which constitute his own Happiness. They are the Dictates of eternal Truth; and every Step we take in the

S E R M. Paths of them, brings Peace and Joy along  
 XII. with it: in which they entirely differ from  
 the Laws of every *other sinful* Principle, that  
 would draw us aside from them.

The *Rewards* of this *Service* (for we *serve* not God for nought) are unexpressible. The *present* Reward is all that inward Satisfaction which a well disposed Mind can take, in the Consciousness of a good and reasonable Conduct; and the Thought of having God's Approbation. The *future* Reward, after the Service is over, is all the Happiness of God's Presence, or, of those more immediate Communications of his Love, and Favour, which he hath promised to all his faithful *Servants*. In the *Scripture-Style*, by being his *Servants*, they become his *Sons*; and, by being his *Sons*, they are adopted into the Inheritance of the Saints in *Glory*.

What is it now, I pray, that can come in Competition with this *Reasonable Service*? Can uncertain *Riches*, or empty *Honour*, or insatiable *Luxury*, pretend to any thing like this? What Title can they shew to the *Services* They claim? or, what can they produce in Favour of their own Right? Can they speak Peace and Satisfaction to the Mind within? Are their *Laws* the equitable *Laws* of *Reason*, and obeyed with the Approbation of our Consciences? or, will they entitle to any, the least  
*Reward*

*Reward* hereafter? What are their *Laws*, indeed, but the hard Commands of Tyrants, accompanied by Disquiet, here, and ending in Unhappiness and eternal Death, hereafter; flattering with Images of Pleasure, but leading to certain Pains?

Here then let us stop, and acknowledge that it is Almighty God alone, who can justly claim Us, as his Servants; He alone, who hath the Reward of our Services, in his Hand; and hath Power to execute what his Goodness hath promised us; and He, alone, therefore, who demands, and deserves, our whole Service. We cannot, We see plainly, serve *Him*, whilst we serve *other* contrary *Masters*. To him, therefore, without Delay, without Reserve, without Hypocrisy, let us give up ourselves, as true *Servants*; and shew ourselves such, by our sincere, constant, and uniform Obedience to all his holy Laws: that so we may, at last, with the good and faithful *Servant* in the *Parable*, enter into the *Joy* of our Lord.



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*The AMBITION of CHRIST'S Disci-  
ples reprov'd.*

S E R M O N XIII.

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MATTHEW XX. 26, 27.

*But it shall not be so amongst you: but whosoever  
will be Great amongst you, let him be your  
Minister: and whosoever will be Chief  
amongst you, let him be your Servant.*

**T**HE Occasion of this Lesson of our S E R M.  
*Lord's* is particularly related in the XIII.  
*Verses* immediately before these Words. 

*The Mother of Zebedee's Children, (viz. James  
and John,) being very desirous of shewing the  
great Affection she had for Them, and her  
Zeal to promote their Interest, came with  
Them to our Blessed Lord, whose Disciples  
they were, and, with the proper Marks of  
Respect, let him know that she had a certain  
Thing to ask of Him. Our blessed Lord,  
always inclined to grant to all his Follow-*

SERMON. ers every Thing truly good for them, presently  
 XIII. asked her what Favour it was she desired? It  
 appeared by what followed *that She* was not  
 content with the ordinary Marks of his  
 Kindness, dispensed to her *Sons*, in common  
 with his *other Apostles*; but hoped for some  
 very extraordinary and signal Token of his  
*Love* to her two Children; Something that  
 she esteemed the greatest Gift and Honour  
 they were capable of receiving from him.  
 And this was, That, he being the *Messi-*  
*ah*, and his glorious *Kingdom* being now to  
 be opened (agreeably to her Expectation,  
 and that of all the *Jews*) with the greatest  
 earthly Glory, her *two Sons*; might have the  
 two principal Places in this *Kingdom*; and  
 might sit, the *one* on his Right Hand, and the  
*other* on his Left, as his two greatest Favorites,  
 and chief Officers. This was her Notion of  
 Good and Happiness; and according to That,  
*This* was her Petition.

Our *Lord*, with the greatest Goodness,  
 turned himself to the *two Apostles*, in whose  
 Name, and with whose Consent this Pe-  
 tition was made, and said, *Ye know not*  
*what ye ask: that is*, you are not yet sen-  
 sible what a Scene of Difficulties *They* must  
 go through, who desire to be *Great* in my  
*Kingdom*; and what it is that is requisite to the  
 making

making you the highest amongst my FAVORITES: *Are ye able to drink of the Cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the Baptism that I am baptized with?* You must not expect to arrive at any Dignity in *my Kingdom*, without following my Steps. And are You able to do as I, your Master, must do; and to undergo what I must undergo, before I arrive at my own Glory? The *two Disciples*, not knowing well what He meant, and being possessed of the Opinion that, let these *Difficulties* and *Distresses* be what They would, His *Kingdom* would display itself, *after* their short Continuance, in all worldly Pomp, and *Victory* over all the Enemies of his People; and still inflamed with the same Desire of *Power*, and *Preeminence*, answered him with a great deal of Confidence, that They were *able* to follow him, and to *drink* of the same *Cup* that he should drink of, whatever it should be.

Our Lord, well knowing that, in the midst of all their Ignorance, They had a sincere Zeal for *Him*, and his Service, and that they would be great Instruments of good in his *Church*, said unto Them, *Ye shall, indeed, drink of my Cup*; that is, (if we speak more plainly than our *Lord* at this Time designed to speak,) Ye shall, indeed, be persecuted and afflicted, according to the Example of your *Master*;

SERM.


XIII.



SER M. *Master*; and go through a Scene of such like  
 XIII. Difficulties as I myself must; and, by this  
 Means, make yourselves fit to be glorified in  
 my *Kingdom*. But, supposing you thus to fol-  
 low my Steps in this uneasy Way to *Glory*;  
 yet, *To sit on my Right Hand and on my Left, is*  
*not mine to give; but it shall be given to Them,*  
*for whom it is prepared of my Father*; that is,  
 the chief Places of *Dignity*, in my heavenly  
 Kingdom, are not now, to be disposed of,  
 according to my arbitrary Will and Pleasure;  
 or to be given away any otherwise than as my  
*Father* has seen fit, in his perfect and unerring  
 Wisdom, to decree and order them.

When the other *Ten* Apostles heard what had  
 passed betwixt *Jesus*, and the *Two Brethren* and  
 their *Mother*; what *They* had solicited, and  
 how great their Ambition was; *They*, as little  
 knowing the Nature of their *Master's Kingdom*,  
 as the other *Two*, and as much desiring  
 the great Posts and Honours in it, were very  
 angry at the Request of *James* and *John*, and  
 very uneasy at their aspiring Designs. But  
*Jesus* called them *all* to him, and took Occasi-  
 on from the *Petition* of the *two Brethren*, and  
 from the *Pride* of the other *Ten*, to instruct  
 them a little farther in the Nature of his King-  
 dom; and to teach them, that though in the  
 Nations of this World, Those were reputed  
 the



the *Greatest* who had the greatest outward S E R M.  
 Dignities, and the highest *Authority*; yet, in XIII.  
*his Kingdom*, They should be accounted the   
*Greatest*, who had least *Pride*, and least *Ambition*; and who were most ready to stoop to do all good Offices, and to *minister*, as Servants, to their Brethren. And this *Instruction* he concludes with his own *Example* (ver. 28.) *even as the Son of Man came not to be ministred unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many*: as if he had said; As I myself, whom you will easily acknowledge to be the *Greatest* in *my own Kingdom*, think it no Diminution of that Greatness to condescend to all Instances of *Love* and Kindness to Mankind; and now am come into the World to be a *Servant* to *Men*, and, at last to dye a servile and ignominious Death for their Sakes, and to procure their Happiness.

Having now related to you, and explained, as I went along, this *History* of the *Ambition* of the *Two Brethren*; their *Mother's* Petition; the Answer of our *Lord*; the *Indignation* of the *other Apostles*; and our *Saviour's* Instruction, occasioned by their mistaken Notions: it is my Design to consider, not the *Words* of the *Text* only; but what other particulars shall offer themselves, upon the Review of this whole *History*, and the *Circumstances* of it.

And

SERM. And the Observations I shall make at present,  
XIII. are These :




I. This *Story* gives Us Occasion to observe, how inclined Men are to mistake their own Happiness; and how apt Many *Parents* are to overlook the real Good, and true Interest, of their *Children*; and to frame their Wishes with regard to *Them*, rather with a View to the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than to their true and lasting Happiness.

II. This History gives Occasion to observe the great Tendency, and strong Bias, there is in human Nature, towards outward Dignity, and Superiority over Others.

III. We may observe from it, what Notions the *Jews* had, at this Time, of the *Kingdom* of their *Messiah*, and the *Nature* of his *Glory*.

IV. It concerns us principally to regard what our blessed Lord here delivers and intimates about the *Nature* of his own Kingdom; and the Method of attaining to the greatest Dignities, and highest Stations, in it.

I. This *Story* gives us Occasion to observe, how inclined Persons are to mistake their own Happiness; and how apt too many *Parents* are to overlook the real Good and true Interest  
of


of their Children; and to frame their Wishes S E R M.  
with regard to *Them*, rather with a View to XIII.  
the Riches and Grandeur of this World, than   
to their true and lasting Happiness.

Here were Two of our *Lord's Disciples*, who had been his Followers for some Time, so grossly ignorant in the Doctrine he had delivered, as to think that they were not capable of greater Happiness than They should experience, if they were placed in an eminent Post of Honour and Dignity, above their Brethren, in that *Kingdom* of their *Lord*, which, according to their Notion of it, was very soon to be opened, full of earthly Glories and temporal Splendour. And here was their *Mother*, who thought she could not give a greater Proof of her Love for her Children, than by joining with Them, in what was truly *their* Petition, and adding her Request to our *Lord*, in order to procure them this great Dignity which they aimed at. How much better had They consulted their true Happiness, had they asked to be instructed in the certain Method of obtaining and improving All those Virtues and Graces, which are the eternal Ornaments of a Christian Mind? And how much greater a Demonstration had their *Mother* given, of her True Love to them, if she had checked their forward *Ambition*, and aspiring Thoughts;

SERM. Thoughts; and petitioned our *Lord* for his  
 XIII. favorable Directions, in order to make her Sons  
 glorious in all that was lovely in his Eyes,  
 and agreeable to his great Design?

After our *Lord's* Resurrection, They were sufficiently convinced of the Folly of their former *Address* to *Him*; and found, by Experience, that *His Kingdom* was to be established by Persecution and Hardships; and a Place of Dignity in it, to be obtained by the Practice of the lowest *Humility*. How happy had it been, if the *Christians* of all succeeding Ages, had been wise by their Example; and had learned, from their Weakness, and our *Lord's* Instruction occasioned by it, to check and conquer this same Temper in Themselves?

But it is too visible, That, though the Nature of *Christ's heavenly Kingdom* is so plainly declared, and the Way to the *Glories* of it so clearly pointed out, through the Path of *Humility*, in the Writings of his *Apostles*, and his own Discourses; yet, there are Few that can persuade themselves to think the Crowns of Heaven, upon the Terms of the *Gospel*, worthy of so warm a Contention, and so eager a Pursuit as any temporal Superiority, or earthly Dignity, is. How much Time, and how much Attendance, and how much Importunity, can Men employ, in soliciting some worldly

worldly Honour, or Post of Rank, above SERM.  
 Others, who perhaps, grudge to bestow a XIII.  
 few Minutes of a Day upon the Thoughts of   
 Religion, and the Pursuit after the good  
 Things of another World? How many Men,  
 who know the *Tenor* of the *Gospel*, and pro-  
 fess to believe it, are seen to lay out the  
 Strength and Eagerness of their Desires, for  
*Themselves*, upon the *Possessions*, or *Pleasures*,  
 here below; without mixing, perhaps, one  
 hearty *Prayer* for *Possessions*, and *Pleasures*, of  
 another Nature? And no wonder, if such Per-  
 sons, as far as They concern *Themselves* with  
 the *Happiness* or *Unhappiness* of their *Children*,  
 should chuse to fix their *Wishes* for *Them*, on  
*the Things which are seen*, as the Instruments  
 of all Good; rather than on *the Things, which*  
*are not seen.*

We may judge, without Uncharitableness,  
 that the Motions of their Hearts all centre in  
 this World, by the indefatigable Pains They  
 will be at, to raise their *Children* to *State* and  
*Riches*, here below; and the little Concern  
 they express, to make them *Great* by *Good-*  
*ness*; by the Practice of *Charity* and *Humility*,  
 and all the other moral Virtues. There are but  
*Few* that can *taste* this Sort of *Greatness* and  
*Glory, Themselves*; and *Few* therefore, who  
 will recommend it to *Those*, in whom They


SERM. are most nearly concerned. *Some*, I trust and  
 XIII. believe, there are, who are not ashamed of a  
 different and better Conduct. But the Num-  
 ber is great of Those, who are so blind and  
 mistaken in their Notions of *Happiness*, that  
 they too often wish and procure, for Them-  
 selves, and their *Children*, *Misery* instead of it ;  
 whilst They are labouring only after such  
*Glories*, *Greatness*, and *Wealth*, as, in the End,  
 often prove the greatest *Diskonour*, and the tru-  
 est *Poverty*, to an intelligent Being. And,  
 as this is the Case, Who can wonder, That, by  
 the Many, *He* is not accounted so good a Father,  
 whose chief Regards are expressed in what  
 tends to the real and lasting Happiness of his  
*Son* ; as *He*, who leaves no Methods unat-  
 tempted, to raise him to such a Highth of  
 Greatness ; or to overwhelm Him with such  
 Hoards of Money ; as must bring along with  
 them the greatest Danger to his Virtue and  
*Eternal* Interest.

II. The *History* now before us, gives us oc-  
 casion to observe the great *Tendency*, and strong  
*Bias*, there is, in human Nature, to the Love  
 of *Superiority*, in Power, and Place, over  
 our Fellow-Creatures in the same Society.

The *Twelve Apostles* were now, as it were,  
 divided into *two* Parties ; and both equally  
 tainted

fainted with the same Sort of aspiring Thoughts. SERM.  
*Two* of them hoped to have prevented the XIII.  
 Attempts of the *Others*, and to have secured  
 to themselves the *Places* of prime *Dignity* in  
 their Master's *Kingdom*. The other *Ten* dis-  
 dained to be thought inferior, or subject, to  
*Them*; and conceived a great Anger against  
 them for their Design. It may, indeed, raise  
 some Wonder, that such a *Temper* should at  
 all take place in the Breasts of Those, who  
 saw Nothing in their own *Master*, more re-  
 markable, than the greatest Instances of the  
 contrary Spirit, of Meekness and Humility.

If any thing can be an Excuse for this, and  
 abate our Wonder, it is, that they All thus  
 strove for Dignity, and worldly Glory, when  
 they thought their Master's *Kingdom*, a *King-*  
*dom* only of this World. But who can for-  
 bear to wonder more, as well as to lament,  
 that *Christians*, who cannot read a *Page* in  
 the *Gospel*, without reading their own indis-  
 pensable Obligation to all the Offices of Hu-  
 mility, for the Good of Others, should be so  
 devoted to the Love of *Superiority*, as we every  
 Day may observe them to be? What a Contention  
 does there often appear, in our World, for  
*Place* and *Precedence*? what Passion, and Re-  
 venge, for an Affront put upon the supposed  
 Honour and Dignity of a Man? What a Care

SER M. and Caution, about every *Punctilio* of Ceremony, and Observance? What a Noise, about  *Family*, and *Titles*; the Antiquity of a *Name*; the Dignity of *Predecessors*; or, the like Sort of Excellencies? Nay, what a prodigious Value is there often set, even upon so low a Matter, as Equipage and Attendance?

It would weary one to speak, or even to think, of the Vanities and Follies of weak Mortals, upon this Head; the Uneasinesses, Quarrels, Jealousies, and Breaches, it occasions; the inexcusable Mispende of Time, and Neglect of all that is great and good, which this Temper introduces into the World; and the great Mischiefs which, in various Shapes, have proceeded from it, in every Age. And yet, Mankind seem not, in the least Degree, wiser for their Experience; or at all the more disposed to set only a just Value upon those *Distinctions* which the Nature of Society makes proper amongst Men; or, to resist that Inclination (that *perverse* Inclination) there is, in human Nature, to the Sweets of *Superiority*, and *Power* over Others.


It is one of the meanest *Characters* we can draw, of any Men, to describe Them, as searching out Opportunities of depressing and sinking Others *below* them; and finding out continually some new *Distinctions*, if the old



Ones are worn out, in order to place their SERM.  
*Brethren* in a meaner and more contemptible XIII.  
 Rank than Themselves ; and thinking the most  
 empty Reasons sufficient for this ignoble and  
 unmanly Purpose. And yet this is so true,  
 and so universally observed, that it is constant-  
 ly lamented by all good Men ; and constantly  
 ridiculed by All, who make Themselves pub-  
 licly merry with the Follies of Mankind.  
 Thus are the Minds of reasonable Creatures  
 busied about *Trifles*, which divert them from  
 Matters of infinitely greater Concern ; and are  
 founded upon such *Maxims* only, as appear  
 to be unworthy of their Attention, either as  
 Men, or as Members of human Society. Let  
 us now proceed.

III. The *third Observation*, I said, we might  
 make from this *History*, related to Those *No-*  
*tions* which were, at that Time, common  
 amongst the *Jews*, about the Nature of the  
*Kingdom* of their *Messiah*.

We find, in this *Passage* of the *Gospel*, not  
 only *James* and *John*, with their *Mother*, but  
 also the other *Ten Apostles*, all agreeing in the  
 same Expectation of a Temporal *Kingdom* of  
*Christ* ; and of Places of *Eminence*, and *worldly*  
 Authority, to be enjoyed under Him : as ap-  
 pears from the *Lesson* our Lord reads to them

SERM. all at last, about the Way to *Greatness* in his XIII. Dispensation; and from many other Places of  the *New Testament*: from which we may gather, that the *Apostles* themselves could not, before They were better instructed, so much as bear the Thought of their *Master's Suffering* Death; or of his reigning in any other *Kingdom*, but *One* full of this World's Majesty and Glory. They did, indeed, cleave to Him, in his low and mean Estate, convinced by the powerful Works he shewed forth: but They were continually watching, and longing, till he should open another Scene, and *reveal himself to the World*, by *restoring the Kingdom to Israel*. Thus had these well-meaning Men the same low and groveling Expectations, which were entertained by the Crowd around them.

For the *Jews* universally neither looked for, nor desired, any *Messiah*, but *One*, who should crown them with the Glories of this World; and clothe their temporal *Enemies* with Shame: *One*, who should *blefs* them with Victory, and Plenty, and Riches, and Power. Nor would the far greater Part of that People accept of any *Salvation*, or *Blessing*, which could be offered, but such a *Salvation*, and such a *Blessing*, as They had figured to Themselves upon the Principles of this World only. The *saving*

*saving Them from their Sins*, which was the SERM.  
*Salvation of Jesus*; and the *Blessing Them*, XIII.  
 by *turning Them from their Iniquities*, which  
 was the *Blessing* of his Gospel: *These* were  
 Kinds of *Salvation*, and *Blessing*, which They  
 thought too mean, and contemptible Offers,  
 for *their Messiah* to make; or for Them to  
 accept. They had no Relish for such Sort of  
 Happiness: and desired no Part in a Kingdom,  
 which was not of *this World*.

The *Apostles*, indeed, were sincere and honest, whilst they were so grossly mistaken. But the Bulk of that Nation were led to these Notions through a Course of Wickedness, and Hypocrisy. No Wonder, therefore, that those Persons should go on to greater and greater Degrees of Hardness of Heart, and reject a spiritual *Messiah*, who had before given themselves up to their own Lusts and Passions; and had shewn, by their Manners, that there was, in their Opinions, no greater Happiness to Mankind, than the Enjoyments of Flesh and Blood; the Glories, Profits, and Pleasures, of this World. This was their *Principle*. And the *Argument* from this *Principle* was very agreeable to it, *viz.* That, the *Blessing* of their *Messiah*, who was to make them *happy*, could consist in Nothing, but what They themselves accounted their greatest *Happiness*; and, No-


SERM. thing being, by Them, accounted so essential  
 XIII. to *That*, as these *temporal* good Things: *This*  
 Blessing, therefore, must consist in granting,  
 and securing, to Them, the unbounded Enjoy-  
 ment of what They so highly valued. But,

IV. It concerns us chiefly to regard what  
 our *Lord* delivers, upon this Occasion, con-  
 cerning the Nature of his own *Kingdom*; and  
 the Method of attaining the greatest *Honours*  
 in it. And,

*First*, It is plainly implied in his *Answer* to  
 the *Petition* made to Him, in Behalf of the two  
*Satan-Disciples*, that his *Kingdom* was so  
 far from consisting in worldly Pomp and Glo-  
 ry; that his true *Servants* were to expect to  
 meet with Persecution, and all evil Treat-  
 ment, for their Master's Sake. And,

*Secondly*, The *Instruction* which He gives to  
 all his twelve *Apostles* at last, expressly taught  
 Them that the Way to be *great* and glorious  
 in his *Kingdom*, both here, and hereafter, is  
 to be *humble*; and truly disposed to condescend  
 to one another, and to stoop to all good  
 Offices, for the Service of their Brethren.

*First*, I say, It is plainly implied in our Lord's  
 Answer to the *Petition* of *James* and *John*, and  
 their *Mother*, that his *Kingdom* was so far from  
 consisting in worldly Pomp and Magnificence,  
 that,


that, in this World, all his true *Servants* SERM.  
 were to expect to meet with Persecution, and XIII.  
 great Hardships, for their Master's Sake. This   
*Answer* is in the 22d Verse: where, instead  
 of feeding them with Hopes of enjoying great  
 Power and worldly Grandeur, under *Him*,  
 he mentions the *Cup*, He himself was to drink  
 of; and the *Baptism*, He himself was to be  
 baptized with; and proposes the *same Cup*,  
 and the *same Baptism*, to Them, for their Por-  
 tion, before they could come to any Glory in  
 his Kingdom. It is true, the *ordinary* Course of  
 a Christian's Life, in these later Ages, is not expos-  
 ed to such *Persecutions*, and to such severe Trials,  
 as the Lives of the *Apostles* were, at the Time  
 when They were sent forth to be the first Preach-  
 ers of *Christianity*. But yet, This is applicable  
 to all sincere *Christians*, in some Degree, That  
 They must drink of their Lord's *Cup*, and be  
 baptized with his *Baptism*; that They must  
 follow him through evil Report, and evil Treat-  
 ment; through Reproaches and Disgraces;  
 and through many, not inconsiderable, Hard-  
 ships, though not perhaps so far, as to a *Cross*,  
 or to a *Stake*. They may not be called to part  
 with *Life* itself, for the Sake of their *Faith*,  
 or their *Integrity*: But they will certainly  
 have occasion to exercise a great deal of *Pati-*  
*ence*, and *Courage*, if they resolve, in all Cases,  
 to

SERM. to approve themselves *his Disciples*. For  
 XIII. there never yet was any Age of the World  
 known to be so indulgent to *Virtue*; and so  
 kind to the Practice of all the *Christian Duties*;  
 as not sometimes to cast many Difficulties, and  
 many Grievances, in the Paths of the virtuous  
*Christian*, under some Pretense, or other.

But the principal Thing that we ought to  
 remark, is, the *Instruction* our Lord gives to  
 his *Disciples*, upon the Sight of their indecent  
*Pride* and *Ambition*, in the Words of the  
*Text*: By which We are plainly taught, as  
 I observed just now, in the

*Second Place*, That the Way to be great  
 and glorious in his *Kingdom*, both here and  
 hereafter, is to be *humble*; and disposed to  
 condescend to all good Offices; and to make  
 ourselves the *least* amongst our Brethren, ra-  
 ther than to contend for Superiority and Pre-  
 eminence.

This was our *Lord's* Instruction. But it was  
 a *Lesson* too hard for the *Apostles* Themselves,  
 at the Time when it was first given Them;  
 and is daily seen to be too hard for the  
 generality of *Christians*, though it be so in-  
 dispensably insisted upon, in the *Gospel*. Not  
 that it is, or can be, sensibly *hard*, or pain-  
 ful, to *Those*, who will consider what They  
 are originally; and how much Occasion,  
 and

and how great Reason, they have to be *hum- SER M*  
*ble* and *lowly*: Not that it doth not carry its XIII.  
 own Reward along with it, when duly prac-   
 tised; freeing the Soul from all those Uneasi-  
 nesses that attend upon Pride and Ambition;  
 and filling it with all the Quiet, and Peace,  
 and Satisfaction, naturally flowing from the  
 Contrary: Not that it is not reasonable and  
 becoming all Men, in itself, standing in no  
 Need of a positive Command to enforce it:  
 but it is a *hard* Lesson, because Men have  
 been generally trained up in the Notions of Pride  
 and Ambition; and therefore, are seldom dis-  
 posed to regard what is truly reasonable, and  
 fitting their Natures, so much as what is agree-  
 able to their present Inclinations, and the  
 Practice and Customs of a corrupted World.

Many are the *Considerations*, by which we  
 might inforce upon Ourselves, and our own  
 Consciences, the Practice of this *Instruction*  
 in the *Text*. But, because our blessed Lord  
 uses no Argument, in this Place, to in-  
 force it upon his *Disciples*, except his own *Ex-  
 ample*; I shall, therefore, confine myself, at  
 present, to the *same Argument*; and endeavour  
 briefly to shew the Strength of it, with regard  
 to *Ourselves*, as well as His *Apostles*.

He is *our* Lord and Master, as He was  
*theirs*. And, therefore, we cannot think it  
 beneath

SER M. beneath Us, to behave Ourselves, as *He* did.

XIII. This he himself, upon several Occasions, judg-  
 ed to be a good Argument to recommend any  
 moral Duty, That He himself practised it.  
*Learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly*, is his  
 own Direction; in the Case of that *Humility*,  
 I am now speaking of. And, indeed, We  
 must either throw off all Relation to Him, or ac-  
 knowledge it to be a very forcible Consideration.  
 He was far exalted above Us, before He de-  
 scended to converse with us here below; high  
 above all Principalities and Powers; above the  
 greatest and wealthiest and most powerful of  
 Us, the poor inconsiderable Inhabitants of this  
 Earth. But, notwithstanding this infinite Dis-  
 tance betwixt him and us, He pitied Us, and  
 condescended to be subject to our Infirmities; to  
 live a poor and despicable Life in our wretched  
 World; and, at last to lay down his Life, at the  
 Command and Decree of a Man. He knew  
 perfectly well what was becoming a reason-  
 able Being; what Behaviour was beneath the  
 Dignity of an understanding Nature, and what  
 was not so. And his *Notions* of that *Dignity*  
 appear from hence, That, during his Abode  
 amongst Men, He divested himself of all *Ap-  
 pearance* of Grandeur, and stooped to minister  
 to the *meanest* of his *Servants*; whose Inter-  
 est He regarded, both in his Life, and in his  
 Death.



Death. And it is very remarkable, and SERM. ought to be taken into this *Argument*, what XIII. St. *Paul* affirms, That for this very Humiliation, and *making himself of no Reputation*, and descending to wear *the Form of a Servant*, God exalted Him, and crowned him with Glory inexpressible. ~~~~~

From this, then, we cannot but thus reason with Ourselves. If He, who was so great, and so wise, did not think it beneath his Dignity, to condescend to such Instances of *Humility*, as we are never called to; to live such a Life of *Lowliness*, and die such a Death, in order to minister to the Necessities of Mankind; We cannot think it beneath the Dignity of the Highest of Us, to imitate this great Example; and even make Ourselves, by the lowest Instances of Love, truly subservient to the good of our Brethren, in this World, and their true and eternal Interest, in That to come.

When we look upon this great *Example*; and see our *Lord* bending Himself to all Acts of Charity, towards Those who were so much below him; how can we think it right to stand upon little Niceties, and Punctilios; or becoming Us, to find out any trifling Excuses to exempt Ourselves from doing the like good Offices to our Fellow-Creatures, in the same *lowly* way? Let not his *Example*, therefore, be ever out of our

SERM. our Minds, when any occasion of *Humility*  
 XIII. presents itself to us. Let us consider how  
 readily that *Lord*, whom we serve, would  
 have laid hold on such Opportunities: and  
 we shall be ashamed to avoid them Our-  
 selves. Let us look upon those Glories which  
 He is said to have acquired by his *Humility*;  
 and they will animate us to bear even the *Re-  
 proach* of *Humility* here below, if *Reproach*  
 can ever follow so lovely a Virtue. And, as  
*He is set down at the Right Hand of God*; and  
*has a Name given him above every Name*, for  
 the Sake of his *Lowliness* and *Condescension*;  
 so We, by the same *Practice*, may hope to sit  
 down at *his Right Hand*, and to be crowned  
 with *Glory* and *Honour* in the Presence of  
 God.

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*The Different Characters of John the  
Baptist, and Jesus Christ.*

S E R M O N XIV.

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LUKE vii. 33, 34.

*John the Baptist came neither eating Bread,  
nor drinking Wine, and ye say, he hath a  
Devil. The Son of Man is come, eating  
and drinking, and ye say, Behold a gluttonous  
Man, and a Wine-bibber, a Friend of Pub-  
licans and Sinners.*

**T**HIS is our blessed Lord's own ACCOUNT SERM.  
both of the Manner of Life XIV.  
used by *John the Baptist*; his Fore-  
runner, and by *Himself*; and of the Perverseness  
of the *Jews*, in misinterpreting and censuring  
the Conduct of them Both. *John the Baptist*  
*came neither eating Bread, nor drinking Wine*;  
*i. e.* he avoided all common Conversation with  
Men, and retired from the Noise of the Mul-  
titude; not so much as allowing himself the  
Enjoyment

SERM. Enjoyment of human Society frequently ; or  
 XIV. laying hold on any Opportunities of *eating,*  
 and *drinking,* with the rest of the World about  
 Him. And the *Jews,* because they were not  
 disposed to receive his Doctrine, (which was  
 the severe Doctrine of Repentance, and Amend-  
 ment,) and his Testimony concerning *Jesus*  
*Christ,* represented him as a Person disturbed in  
 his Brain, possessed by some evil and melan-  
 choly Spirit ; and led, by That, into the Re-  
 tirement, and Solitude, and Austerity, which  
 he seemed to affect.

Well then, one would have thought, by  
 this, that if a *Prophet* should appear amongst  
 them, with all the Signs of a divine Missi-  
 on ; and converse freely with Them ; not re-  
 fusing to be present at their Entertainments,  
 or to mix himself with them, upon all just  
 Occasions ; that This should be quite accept-  
 able to Them ; and all their Prejudices be re-  
 moved. But it was far otherwise. For *the*  
*Son of Man,* the *Messiah,* *Jesus Christ,* came  
*eating and drinking ; i. e.* conversing freely  
 with Mankind ; partaking with them, upon  
 all proper Occasions, of the ordinary Re-  
 freshments of Life, without Scruple ; and  
 laying hold on all Opportunities of a free So-  
 ciety with the World around Him : and yet  
 This also was so far from pleasing, that  
 They

They only changed their Note of Dislike and Censure; and said, *Behold* a Man, addicted to his Appetite, a Lover of Wine, and a Friend to the *Worst* of Men. SERM.  
XIV.

And, indeed, He was a *Friend of Publicans and Sinners*, in the truest Sense of the Word, *Friendship*: *i. e.* His great Design was to do them *real* Service, and to lead them to *Repentance* and Happiness. But it was so manifest a Piece of wicked Scandal and Injustice, that he was *intemperate*, in those Opportunities which only he could take of conversing with the Men, whom he came to save; that no Person of common Sense; No One, whose Eyes were not blinded with the darkeſt Prejudice, could poſſibly believe, much leſs, report, ſuch a Thing. So far from it, that Nothing was more viſible, than the greateſt and ſtricteſt Abſtinance from all Exceſs, through his whole Life and Converſation: no Delight in the pampering of his Body, or the pleaſing of his Senſes; but a conſtant Regard to the Rules of Sobriety and Temperance. But, waving this, I ſhall return to my Deſign in chooſing theſe Words, at this Time: and That will appear in the Conſideration of theſe following Particulars.

I. The different Behaviour of St. *John Baptist*, and our bleſſed *Saviour*, with Reſpect to  
T
human

SERM. human Society ; and the Agreeableness of it  
 XIV. to their different Designs.

II. The gross *Misinterpretation* put by the *Jews*, upon this their different Conduct ; and the *Lesson* we may learn from thence. After which I design,

III. To say something, with respect to these two different Methods of Life : That of *Austerity and Retirement* ; and That of a more free Enjoyment of human Society.

I. We see plainly, in the very Words now before us, the different Behaviour and Conduct of our blessed *Saviour*, and *John the Baptist*, with respect to human Society : and shall presently observe the *Agreeableness* of it to their different *Designs*. *John the Baptist* chose a *Wilderness*, or Desert, for the Scene of his Appearance and Action ; avoided the Places of Concourse and Society ; and took upon him, in the best Sense, the Habit and Vow of *Austerity*, and the strictest *Abstinence*. I call it the Scene of his Appearance, and Action : for this Retirement was not, as some have been in later Ages, chosen by Him for an unactive and idle Life of *Contemplation*, and useless *Speculation* ; nor with the least Thought of withdrawing himself from the Eyes and Ears of a vain  
 I and


John *the* Baptist, and Jesus Christ. 275

and wicked World, by a voluntary and pleasing Recluseness within Walls and Fences. But it was embraced by Him, on quite contrary, and very useful Accounts.


S E R M.  
XIV.  
~~~~~

He was to preach, and therefore to be known, to his Country-men. And accordingly, the Desert he chose, at his opening his Ministry, was very near to *Jerusalem*: where his Name could not but be soon heard of, and whither He sometimes went himself. And there was something so peculiar in his Manner of Life, and his Preaching, which presently became the Subject of Discourse; that it drew the Attention of all People towards him: and They were induced by his Fame, and the Curiosity which That raised in them, to go out to Him, and hear what He taught, and what He pretended to. Our blessed *Lord*, on the contrary, when he displayed himself, and opened his Message to Mankind, frequented the Places of greatest Concourse; and laid hold on all fair and good Opportunities of conversing with the World of *Sinners*. He chose even to *eat and drink* with Them; and took their own Times, and attended their Leisure, and their Invitations; and seemed rejoiced at every Occasion of the most familiar Intercourse with them.

And this different Conduct, We shall now see, was very suitable and agreeable to their

S E R M. *different Designs.* The *Baptist's* great Bu-
 XIV.  finesfs was to raise the Minds, and turn the
 Eyes, of the People of the *Jews*, towards the
Messiah, who was now going to appear; to
 prepare them, by the *Baptism* and *Doctrin*e of
 Repentance and Reformation, to understand
 the true Nature of his Kingdom, and to re-
 ceive Him when he should shew himself; to
 bear a Testimony to the true *Messiah*; and, af-
 ter that was done, He himself *was to decrease*,
 and the other *was to increase*: as He express'es
 his own Sense of his Office. Now, there is
 something in that retired, and severe, Man-
 ner of Life He chose, which is apt to raise
 the Curiosity and Attention of Men very
 much; and to put them upon asking such
Questions, as may lead to the Knowledge of
 the most useful and important Truths.

And We see accordingly, that this Method of
 Living and Preaching, in which *John* the *Bap-*
tist shewed himself, had such an Influence upon
 the *Jews*, that Many were in doubt whether
 he was not Himself the *Messiah*, the promised
 Saviour of that Nation. It was so long,
 since so much Sanctity, and so much Con-
 tempt of the World, had been seen amongst
 them, that, in their good and sober Moods,
 They were induced to think, from such Be-
 ginnings, that This might possibly be *He*:
 though

though they quickly came to reject Him, S E R M.
 when they found he spake of Nothing so much XIV.
 as of *Repentance, and bringing forth Fruits* 
worthy of it. But, after They had thus re-
 jected Him, we find the most Artful and
 Designing amongst Them were so embarrass-
 ed between their own *Conduct* towards the
Baptist, and their Fear of the *People*, that They
 did not know how to answer the *Question* put
 to them by our *Lord*, whether the *Baptism* of
John were of divine Original, or Not? For his
 Manner of Life, and Holiness of Conversation,
 had gained him such an *Authority* amongst
 the *People*, that it would have incensed *Them*,
 to have denied him to be a true *Prophet*; and,
 to have owned it, would have condemned
 Themselves, for not receiving Him.

And as the Manner of his appearing, in
 that outward Garb, and inward Reality, of
Severity and *Austerity*, forcibly invited the
 Eyes and Attention of the Multitude to
 him; and engaged even the *worst* Part of the
Jews to send Messengers to him, to ask him
 of the Character he bore, and the Design he
 came upon: So, likewise, it is worth observ-
 ing, That, his chief Design being to bear Testi-
 mony to a greater *Prophet* than himself; and
 not to ingratiate himself so much with the
 People, as to gather Multitudes of Disciples to

S E R M. his own Person ; He could not have chosen a
 XIV. more proper Method of pursuing this, than
 ~~~~~ that retired and austere Manner of Life. Had  
 he made it his Business to have frequented all  
 Places of Concourse, and gathered to himself  
 great Numbers of *Disciples*, who were often  
 Followers of the *Person*, more than of the  
*Doctrine*, of their Master ; it might possibly  
 have had an unhappy Effect with Relation to  
 the *Messiah* himself, who was to preach Sal-  
 vation to, and make Disciples of, the whole  
*Nation*, as far as They would permit Him.

It must indeed be owned that, the greater the  
 Number of *John's* Disciples had been, the  
 greater Influence it would have had upon the  
 Cause of the *Messiah*, if All of them had cor-  
 dially received their Master's Testimony con-  
 cerning Him. But this, probably, would  
 have been found too hard for *Practice* ;  
 as it carried with it unavoidably this Conse-  
 quence, That *Jesus* was a *greater Prophet* than  
 their Master, *John the Baptist*. For we see, there  
 was always a Contest between the *Disciples* of  
 several *Masters* ; and a great Regret, and En-  
 vey, raised in every Sort, to see their own *Mas-  
 ters* sunk and depressed by the greater Glory  
 of *Others*. And it is not improbable from the  
 sacred Story, that the few Disciples *John* had,  
 were leavened with this Sort of Temper ; and  
 that

that They could hardly have been persuaded S E R M.  
 to believe any *Prophet* greater than their *Ma-* XIV.  
*ster*; or, with their whole Heart, receive the  
*Messiah*, who was now going to appear as Such.

Here therefore, was another Reason for the *Baptist's* Manner of Life; That his Business was, Not to consult his own personal Interest, as a *Master* and a *Prophet*, so as to gather *Disciples*, and Followers, to himself; but to be a living *Witness* to one *Greater* than Himself, and only to prepare Men's Hearts for the Reception of *Him*, and his Doctrine. And for this End, the Method which he chose seems much more proper, than if He had mixed himself more with the World; and made it his Business to frequent the Places of popular Concourse, and to shew Himself daily in the Commerce and Crowds of a great City: which might have appeared a Design of gaining Popularity, and Followers to Himself; rather than of serving the Honour and Interest of that Prince of Prophets, the *Messiah*, whose *Fore-runner* only He was.

But the *Messiah* had another Part to act. His great Business was to gain Profelytes and Disciples to *Himself*, who could not adhere too close to him. He could not be too *popular*, when once it was proper to open his Pretensions, and reveal his true Character to

SERM. the World. His great Design was to engage  
 XIV. Mankind to Himself by all proper Methods:  
 and of These, an easy and familiar Conversation, and a Compliance with their innocent Customs, was one of the most likely to win upon them.

Another *Consideration* is, That it was justly designed by God, and expected by the *Jews*, That the *Divinity of Christ's Mission* should be proved by wonderful Works in public; never performed, after such a Manner, and in such Number, before that Time: which being not the Case of *John the Baptist*, it was the less necessary for *Him* to affect the Society and Concourſe of Men. And as the *Truth* of our *Lord's* Pretensions was to be demonstrated, and the Mouth of his Adversaries stopped, by a constant Series of these astonishing and divine Works; upon this Account, a more *public* Scene was the proper Scene of his Action: that He might not be said to have chosen the darkest Corners, and Places void of Witnesses, (which are thought proper Places to shew Tricks in,) and then to have weakly expected the World to believe in *Him*, for the Sake of what They never saw. The clearest Day-Light, and the greatest Multitudes, and even his *Adversaries* themselves, were to be the Spectators (though, to their own Shame, the envious and malicious

ous

ous Spectators,) of the Proofs he had to give S E R M.  
of his divine Authority. And therefore, it X I V.  
became him to pursue them, as it were, of  
his own Accord, with his wonderful Works;  
to appeal, every Day, to the Eyes and Ears  
of Thousands, and to call in all the Witnesses  
possible to the Testimony He had to give of  
Himself. For Truth, entirely void of all *Fraud*,  
doth not fear, but desire, *Witnesses*. Again,

*John the Baptist*, though a Person of extraordinary Holiness of Life, without regard to that peculiar Character in which He appeared, was not designed to be proposed to Mankind, as the great *Example*, for their Imitation: But the *Messiah* was to be that perfect *Example*, which all should be obliged to copy after, with the Care and Attention of sincere Followers. It became Him, therefore, to choose a Sphere of Action, and a Manner of Life, agreeable to the Tempers, and Necessities, and Business, of the *Generality* of Mankind; not such a one, as suits with the Tempers, and Purposes, of a very small and inconsiderable Number. Our *Saviour*, without Doubt, had as mean an Opinion of that Generation of Men, in which He appeared, as it was possible to have conceived from a perfect Knowledge of their Weaknesses, and Follies; their Passions, and Vices. And, had he only had his own Inclination, without regard

SERM. regard to the good of Others, to have consulted  
 XIV. no Person could have relished the Pleasures  
 of Solitude so well: because no Person was so  
 fully sufficient to his own Entertainment and  
 Happiness; or so little in want of Any of the Sup-  
 ports of human Society. But how, then, should  
 he have *fulfilled all Righteousness*? Or, How could  
 He have answered the End of his Appearing,  
 to be made an *Example* to *Us*, who must con-  
 verse, and deal, with one another: who must  
 court and attend one another; and cannot,  
 without our mutual Assistance, preserve the  
 least order in the World; or answer the bene-  
 ficial Ends of *Society*, in it?

But I have said enough on the *first* Head,  
*viz.* the *different* Behaviour of our blessed  
*Lord*, and *John* the *Baptist*, with Relation to  
 human *Society*; and the Agreeableness of this  
 their different Behaviour to their different  
 Characters and Designs. And shall only  
 add this one Caution; that what I have  
 said is not to be understood as if, on the one  
 hand, I thought that *John* the *Baptist* would  
 not have been perfectly ready to a greater Cor-  
 respondence with the World, had it been more  
 for the Purpose of his Appearance, all Things  
 considered; or, as if, on the other hand, I  
 was not sensible that our Saviour had  
 often shewn his Love to Retirement, espe-  
 cially

cially for *Prayer* to his Father: though it is S E R M.  
 observable, this was generally his Entertainment XIV.  
 when there was no Opportunity of con-  
 versing with Mankind; and of doing good to  
 Any of Them by his divine Presence and Dis-  
 course. I come now,

II. To observe, what I proposed in the next  
 Place, *viz.* the gross *Misrepresentation* put  
 by the *Jews*, upon this different Conduct of  
 our *Lord*, and *John the Baptist*. And that is  
 plain in the *Text*. The *One* they censured, as  
 a *Glutton* and a *Wine-bibber*, and a *Friend of*  
*Sinners*, because he *ate and drank*, and enter-  
 ed into Company, after the usual Manner  
 of *Men*, in order to a more free and more  
 beneficial Conversation with Them: And the  
*Other* they esteemed little better than a mad  
 Man, because he seemed to fly from the  
 rest of the World; and lived not after the  
 common Form, but affected something very  
 peculiar in his *Garb*, and in his *Diet*. So  
 hard is it to please Those who are resolved not  
 to be pleased. The *Lesson* we may learn from  
 hence is this, That Men are often very ready  
 to entertain the most unjust Prejudices, rather  
 than yield to the plainest Truths which con-  
 tradict their beloved Notions or Practices.  
 Had the *Jews* entertained the same Notions

of

SERM. of the *Messiah*, and of the *Nature* of his *King-*  
 XIV. *dom*, that the *Baptist*, and our *Saviour*, both  
 W preached; They had shewn no such *Perver-*  
*ness* and *Prejudice*, as now appears; and the  
*Two Prophets* had not met with so unjust and  
 heavy *Censures*. Or, had the *Baptist* and our  
 blessed *Lord* carested them in their beloved  
 Notions of worldly *Greatness* and *Majesty*, or  
 their favorite *Vices*; and taught them *Happi-*  
*ness* after their own absurd false *Scheme*; One  
 may venture to say, They had been extolled  
 to the *Skies*, and Both received with open *Arms*.  
 To such a *Pitch* of *Prejudice* were the *Jews*  
 come, that They could not bear to have their  
 received *Opinions*, or *Practices*, condemned;  
 and would not accept of an *Happiness*, not  
 to be obtained without relinquishing their old  
 beloved *Follies* and *Vices*: When, in *Truth*,  
 it ought to have been quite otherwise. For,  
 if *John* the *Baptist* had preached any other  
*Messiah*, than one whose *Fan* was in his *Hand*,  
 and who required the strictest *Holiness* of  
*Life*; Or, if our blessed *Lord* had preached any  
 other *Gospel*, than the *Gospel* of *Holiness*, and  
*Humility*, and *Love*: the *Jews* might, justly,  
 have charged the *One*, with the *Madness* of  
 having a *Commerce* with evil *Spirits*; and the  
*Other*, with being a *Friend* to *Publicans*, and  
*Sinners*, in the worst *Sense*; a *Lover* of their  
 Practices,




Practices, and an Encourager of their S E R M.:  
Vices. XIV.

It was this Doctrine of Repentance, and Amendment of Life, that gave such a Stop to the *Gospel*, amongst the *Jews*, at first. It is this that hinders the Increase of it, and that bars its Entrance to so many Ears, at this Day. The great Obstruction, I say, to the *Gospel*, is, that it will not reconcile Vice and Happiness, a wicked Life and the Hopes of *Salvation*, together. Could it do this, plainly and effectually, how many Votaries should we daily see flock in, and how many Encomiums should We hear upon it? What *joyful Tidings* would it be accounted, and how glorious a *Salvation*, to the Sons of Men, wearied and affrighted with the Prospect of the *Punishment*, but not with the *Practice*, of their Transgressions?

How obliging and courteous a Thing, therefore, is it, in the *Church of Rome*, to endeavour to make up this great Defect in the *Gospel*; and, by the infallible Spirit it assumes, to supply this Want; and remove the only insuperable Objection to wicked Minds against it? When we consider the Workings of human Nature, we shall not much wonder that *Profelytes* are gained, by teaching Men how to compound with GOD for the Breach of his Laws: Or,  
by

S E R M. by the dextrous Management of such *Machines*,  
 XIV. as *Indulgencies*, and *Absolutions*. But when we  
 consider the *Reason* of the Thing itself, it is  
 most astonishing that even the weakest of  
 Men can be seduced by such Pretenses. For  
 I truly think, That, of the *Two*, it is  
 more easy, and more pardonable, to believe  
*Transubstantiation* itself, than to believe that  
 Almighty God would enter into any such  
 Covenant with Mankind, as should encourage  
 them to continue in their Sins; or give  
 them the Liberty of transgressing the least  
 of those Laws of eternal Reason, which are  
 the Foundation of his own Glory, and of all  
 the lasting Happiness there is in the World.

In *moral Philosophy*, This is as great an Absurdity, as the other is in *Natural*; attended with as many *Difficulties*, and with much more intolerable Consequences, relating to our Eternal Salvation. And, I am sure, it is more excusable to *err* in a Matter of Opinion; nay, though it may draw after it great Evils in the Worship of God, than in a Matter, which destroys the very Essence and Obligation of all *Morality*; confounding *Virtue* with *Vice*; making *Light*, *Darkness*, and *Darkness*, *Light*: and which is, indeed, calculated for the promoting of the whole System of *Immortality* in the World, as much, as if it  
 had

had been designed for Nothing else. Our blessed S E R M.  
*Lord* had no such *Gospel* to preach : and there- XIV.  
fore, found no Reception amongst Men of   
corrupt and profligate Minds ; constant Pur-  
suers of the Pleasures, or, unwearied Sol-  
licitors of the Glories and Honours, of this  
World.

Nay, could a Religion of such Indulgence be  
supposed agreeable to the Will of GOD, I see no  
Need of a *Prophet* to be sent into the World,  
on Purpose to teach, or inculcate, it. No fear,  
but that Mankind would learn this fast enough,  
by the Influence of their own *bad Hearts*, and  
the Example of Others. From the *Beginning* of  
the World, great *Multitudes* had no *other Gospel*,  
but This: and to the *End* of it, I doubt, great  
Multitudes will embrace no other ; but live  
and dye in their *Sins*, expecting Mercy and  
Heaven, whilst they have no Foundation for  
it within, nor Promise of it, from without.

For ourselves ; Let us learn, from this per-  
verse Temper of the *Jews*, how unbecoming  
it is, and how unreasonable, to reject, or to  
neglect, any thing, not because it is not agree-  
able to our own best Principles of Reason, but,  
because it is contrary to our wicked Inclinati-  
ons, and to our worldly Designs. It is ma-  
nifest from the *Gospel*, and from the Accounts  
of

S E R M. of those Days, that the *Jews* set Themselves  
 XIV. to asperse both *John the Baptist* and our *Savi-*  
 our, and, at last, rejected Them, chiefly be-  
 cause They were *Preachers* of the strictest *Ho-*  
*liness* and *Virtue*. It was because the *Bap-*  
*tist* was assisting in *destroying the Works of the*  
*Devil*, that they said he had a *Devil*. And it  
 was because our *Saviour* was *not* a *Friend* to  
*Sinners*, who continue such, that they blas-  
 phemed him as a *Friend to Sinners*, in the  
 worst Sense. But let it not be said that any  
 of his own Followers, who are called by his  
 Name, act, as if They partook, in any Mea-  
 sure, of the same Temper; and retained the  
 same wicked Principles. I come now, in the  
 last Place,

III. To say something, in short, concern-  
 ing those two Methods of living, now seen in  
 the *Christian World*; *That of Retirement* and  
*Austerity*; and *That of a more free and gene-*  
*ral Conversation*: the *One*, sometimes pre-  
 tended to be copied after that of *John the*  
*Baptist*; and the *Other*, really copied after  
 that of our blessed *Lord*.

It must be acknowledged to be very be-  
 coming the Character of a *reasonable Creature*,  
 placed in *this State*, to have a due Sense of  
 the

the Uncertainty and Vanity of the Enjoyments S E R M.  
of this Life. And who would not be glad to XIV.  
retire from a World of Noise and Impertinence, of Ignorance and Folly, and, what is worst of all, of Wickedness and Impiety? Who would not be glad, I say, to do this, in the most absolute Sense, that could support himself in Solitude; were it not, that We have other Obligations to answer, and other Maxims to live by, than the following our own *Inclinations*, or *Humours*? The World is the *Stage of Action*, to a *Christian*: and all the Members of that vast Body are his *Neighbours*; entitled to his Regard, as He is to *Theirs*. The Afflicted, the Desolate, the Lame, the Blind, the Sick, the Weak, the Fatherless, the Widow, the Poor, the Needy, the Ignorant, and the Sinner, These all, We know, called for our *Lord's* Assistance: and He thought it unbecoming *Him* to retire, when Any of these could be met with to receive the Influences of his Goodness. And the same Obligations belong to his *Followers*, by Right of *Descent*. They are the *Disciples* of *Him*, who lived in the World to do good to All in it: and these distressed Objects are left by *Him* to *their* Care; and They are made the Patrons and Guardians of them, in his *Absence*. Whenever a *retired Life* hinders not the Care, and Relief, and Support, of These;

S E R M. nor breaks in upon any other moral Engage-  
 XIV. ment; Or, any of the Duties strictly owing to  
 Human *Society*; it cannot be said to be un-  
 worthy of a Man, or a *Christian*. And ac-  
 cordingly, our *Lord*, we see, freely mixed  
 himself in *Society*, in order to the Benefit of  
 the World about Him, as long as the *Light*  
 permitted Him: and when *Darkness* came on,  
 often laid hold on the Opportunities of what  
 may be called a *Religious Retirement* from it.  
 And generally speaking, *Christians*, in their  
 due Measure, can imitate him in *both* these  
*Cases*. But They, who cannot follow him,  
 in *Both*, are strictly obliged to take especial  
 Care not to neglect the *Former*. This was  
 his peculiar Delight; to converse, with Ease  
 and Humanity, amongst Men, because, with-  
 out This, no Instance of Charity could reach  
 Them: and This was what he peculiarly  
 recommended to his *Followers*, as the Du-  
 ty They owed to their *Fellow-Creatures*.  
 Every Man may find Opportunities of Retire-  
 ment, sufficient to secure the Blessing of Hea-  
 ven, and the Favour of God, by *Prayer*:  
 and every good *Man* will make Use of them.  
 And if He be always disposed to lay hold on  
 every Occasion of doing Good in human Soci-  
 ety, according to his Abilities; He will by  
 These Two Instances of Practice, shew Him-  
 self

self the true Disciple of that *Master*, who went before Him, in Both.

But to make *Retirement*, an *Art*, or a *Burthen*; to build Houses of Entertainment to entice Men into it; to frame arbitrary Rules of Severity for it; to guard it with rigid Vows, too probably, drawing bitter *Repentance* and *Sorrow*, after them; and to clothe it with such Appearances of Something extraordinary, and above the common pitch of Devotion, as may ensnare unguarded and unexperienced Minds into what may prove the great Unhappiness of their whole Lives: Nay, to court it merely on *our own* Account, in order to lead an idle and useles Life; or to be at Leisure, perhaps, not for the Study of God's Will, as delivered to Us by himself, but only for the Improvement of our own peculiar Whimsies: This is, undoubtedly, unworthy of the Grand *Design* of the *Christian Religion*; and was not only never commanded, but never intimated, by the first Preacher of it, and his immediate Successors, as far as we have any Knowledge of them.


That this is not copied after the *Life* of our blessed Saviour, All will allow, who read the History of it; and find Him daily and hourly, conversing with All that came in his Way, in the Streets and

S E R M. Houses of *Jerusalem*, and the neighbouring  
 XIV. Towns. Nor can it be called the *Life* of

*John the Baptist*; or the least Imitation of it: because it is most evident that He retired, not to please his own *Phansy*; but to answer the End of his Office; and dwelt in the *Desert*, not in order to avoid the *World* entirely, but to entice and invite All within his Reach to hear his Doctrine of *Repentance*, and of the *Kingdom of God*, then at hand. And, as far as We know the Nature of this *Kingdom*, or *Gospel*, of *Christ*, We may retire, as much as *That* requires of us, in the Midst of the most populous City; and without throwing off the least Part of our necessary Business, or innocent Conversation: Nay, I may say, We may do this much more agreeably to the Nature and End of that *Gospel*, than if we were shut up, within Walls, from the Sight of Men, and employed our whole Time, in performing, by Night and by Day, the most regular Round of *Offices*, under the specious Title of Devotion.

In a word, the Way of Life, with regard to human Society, in this World, recommended to Us by our Master, is the *Life* of such *Benevolence*, as supposes Us conversing, and acting a Part, in the *Society* around Us; and this cannot be, a *Recluse* Life of *Inaction*, but implies in it the very contrary. *This* is that Behaviour



Behaviour and Conduct of ourselves in the S E R M.  
*Social World*, according to the several Stati- XIV.  
 ons assigned Us in it, which the *Precepts* of our   
 charitable Religion declare to be our Duty.  
 This is what the *Example* of our great *Master*  
 directs Us to: And, this will be our Reward  
 and our Crown to all Eternity. If we can per-  
 fect Ourselves in *this*; We may securely leave  
 to *Others* the Happiness, and the Glory, of  
 any useles and idle *Retirement*, which They  
 may please to miscall by the Name of *Religion*;  
 but which has not the least Tincture of the  
*Religion of Christ*: And may well content our-  
 selves with following, as near as we can, the  
*Footsteps* and *Rules* of our common *Master*, ra-  
 ther than the silly and fruitles *Inventions* of  
 Those, who, under the Cover of his sacred  
 Name, have almost extinguished the Know-  
 ledge of the *main End* of his appearing amongst  
 Men. And this Regard to our *Lord* himself,  
 above All other Directors, I hope, We shall  
 all resolve to shew, in the whole Conduct of  
 our *Lives* here below.



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*The* EXTREMES of RICHES and  
POVERTY.

S E R M O N XV.

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PROVERBS XXX. 8, 9.

*Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me with Food convenient for me. Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? Or, lest I be poor and steal, and take the Name of my GOD in vain.*

I Shall not enter into any Enquiry concerning S E R M.  
the *Person* to whom the Words in this *Chap-* XV.  
*ter* are ascribed. The only Question of Im-  
portance is, whether this be not a Wish, or Pray-  
er, worthy of a wise and considering Man; found-  
ed upon Reason, and a careful Observation of the  
Inconveniences, and Conveniences, attending  
the several States of Life in this World. If it can  
be proved to be a reasonable, and well-grounded  
*Prayer*; we ought all to join in it, whoever  
were the first Author of it. And, on the

S E R M. other hand, if it shall, after Examination, appear to be contrary to *Reason*, and judicious Observation; it can be of no Importance, to find out, if we could, Who was the Person that made this Wish, here recorded.

Now, in order to our judging rightly, in the Case before Us, it is proper to observe that *our Prayer* in the *Text* is plainly founded upon *This*; *viz.* that the Hazards, and Inconveniences, attending the *two Extremes* of boundless *Riches* and the lowest *Poverty*, are so great, and so generally fatal to those who experience either of those two States; that, if a wise Man were to choose for himself, with regard to true Happiness, and the Interest of Virtue and Religion, He would certainly choose the middle Condition: Or, such a *Competency*, and convenient Subsistence, as should set him above the Need of Relief from the Bounty of Others; and enable him to provide tolerably for Those in whom He is most nearly concerned. And as the Proof of the Parts of this *Proposition* will sufficiently vindicate, and establish, the Wisdom of this *Prayer*, which is built upon it; I shall, therefore, make the *Proposition* now mentioned the Subject of my following Discourse.

And here, as to the *one Part* of this *Proposition*, and this *Prayer*, *viz.* That which relates

lates to *Poverty*; there is something in *this* so disagreeable, and so distasteful, to the Bent and Inclination of human Nature; something so contemptible and mean, in the outward Appearance of it, which strikes more upon Men than the unseen and hidden Part of any Condition; that there is not One in the World, perhaps, of Those who may be esteemed in their right Mind, who would voluntarily choose the lowest and meanest Condition of human Life. There always was, and always will be, a general Concurrence and Consent in this Part of the Prayer, *Give me not Poverty*: not, perhaps, for fear of sinning against God, in that Condition, which is the Consideration alledged in the Text; but for fear only of that Contempt and Ignominy, and those Necessities, and worldly Inconveniences, which are annexed to that State.

On the other Side, there is, and always was, and always will be, almost as general a Consent against the *other* Part of this Prayer, which relates to immense and excessive *Riches*. There is something in the outward Appearance and Figure of that Greatness and Superiority which often attend upon vast *Riches*; something in the uncommon Conveniences, and Pleasures, They are supposed to procure; Something which captivates the Minds of

S E R M. most Men, to such a Degree, that They  
 xv. can hardly know how to choose the *best* State,  
 against their own worldly Interest; or, not to  
 wish *Themselves* in that distinguished *Condition*  
 of Life, which They are so apt to envy, and  
 admire, in *Others*. And, generally speaking,  
*He* that should go about to persuade any Man  
 to beseech God earnestly *not* to grant Him the  
 Abundance of *Riches*, would, I fear, be looked  
 upon, in almost the same ridiculous Light, as  
 He would be, who should teach Him to pray  
 expressly *for* the *Extreme* of *Poverty*, and  
 Want.

This being so, That Men are very ready  
 to pray ardently against *Poverty*, and a low  
 Fortune, upon mean and worldly Considera-  
 tions; and as ardently to wish for the greatest  
 Riches, without a due Regard to the natural  
 Consequences of such a Wish: It is, therefore,  
 of Importance to endeavour to shew, on one  
 hand, that there are *Considerations*, of a bet-  
 ter Sort, sufficient to make a *wise* Man pray  
 against the lowest Condition of this Life;  
 that so, our natural Abhorrence of extreme  
*Poverty* may be settled upon a right Founda-  
 tion, and improved into a Virtue: And, on  
 the other hand, still more necessary, and of  
 greater Importance, to shew that there are  
*Reasons* sufficient to remove the Bent of a wise  
 Man's

Man's Thoughts from all anxious and impor- S E R M.  
 tunate Desires after the Abundance and Ex- xv.  
 tremity of *Riches*; that so, we may not fa-  
 tally err, on that Part, on which there is most  
 Danger, from the apparent Tendency of hu-  
 man Nature. Thus shall we be led to fix our  
 Wishes, with respect to this World, in their  
 due Centre, on the middle Condition, rightly  
 tempered between the two Extremes. In  
 order, therefore, to shew the Wisdom and  
 Reasonableness of this *Prayer* in the *Text*, I  
 propose these following Particulars:

I. To consider the fatal Inconveniences and  
 evil Consequences, with respect to lasting  
 Happiness and Religion, naturally attending  
 the Extreme of Wealth, and the Abundance  
 of *Riches*, in this World.

II. To consider, on the other hand, the  
 Inconveniences, with respect to Virtue and  
 Religion, generally seen to attend the lowest  
 Condition of Life, and the Extreme of *Po-  
 verty*.

III. To infer, from what I shall have said,  
 the Reasonableness of desiring the middle Con-  
 dition, called in the *Text*, *Food convenient for  
 Us*; and the greater Likelihood of obtaining  
*Happiness*, and securing and improving our  
*Virtue* and Religion, in this Estate. This will  
 be


SERM. be a sufficient Vindication of the *Wisdom* of  
 xv. the *Prayer* now before us. And,

IV. After I have said what may be proper upon these Heads, I shall be led to answer some *Questions* of Importance, which may offer themselves upon this Subject.

I. In order to shew the *Wisdom* and Reasonableness of the *Prayer* in the *Text*, I shall endeavour to represent to you the many fatal Inconveniencies and evil Consequences, with respect to *Happiness* and *Religion*, which naturally attend the Super-abundance of *Riches* in this World.

And here, if I should attempt to speak of all the Sorts of Folly, and *Madness*, truly so called; and all the *Vices*, to which the Overflowings of *Riches* incline, and naturally lead, frail weak Mortals; of the Vanity, the Pride, the Haughtiness, the Contempt of their Fellow-Creatures, which appear in *Some*; the hard-hearted, selfish, Sordidness, of *Others*; the Luxury, the Idleness, the Profusion, the Intemperance, the immoderate Pursuit of worldly *Pleasures*, to which Many more, by the Guidance of *Riches*, have given themselves up: *the Time would fail Me*. Nor would this be merely a *Declamation*, or a *Satire*, founded




on the Ill-nature and Envy of Those below SERM.  
 this Condition; but a Matter of Fact, too XV.  
 much confirmed by the Observation, and Ex-   
 perience, of many past Ages: and seen, at  
 this Day, to be still so generally *true*, that We  
 seldom hear of an *Exception*.

And this *Evil* is never more remarkable  
 than in the Conduct of Those, who have  
 shewn a good and virtuous Conduct in a *lower*  
 Sphere, but have not been able to withstand  
 the Shock of a larger and more exalted For-  
 tune; or, to be Proof against the Attacks of a  
 sudden and extraordinary Prosperity. How  
 often, upon such Occasions, may We justly  
 say, has the Increase of *Riches* been the Begin-  
 ning of all moral Folly, or the Increase of  
 all moral Evil? How often has the Addition  
 to the outward good Estate of a Man, proved  
 a sensible Diminution of the inward good  
 Estate of his Soul; and the Improvement of  
 his *Fortune*, the Improvement of every evil  
 Disposition of his *Mind*? Where Quiet and  
 Contentment have been known to dwell, in a  
 very great Degree; there, when *Riches* have  
 entered, *Discontent*, and *Uneasiness*, have en-  
 tered with them. Where Friendship, and  
 mutual Confidence, have flourished: there  
 Enmity, and mutual Animosities, have taken  
 Place. Instead of former Repose and Tran-  
 quillity,

SERM. quillity, Quarrels and Law-suits, Care and  
 xv. Anxiety, have been seen. Instead of Love  
 and Amity, Disguft and Jealoufy; instead of  
 Serenity and Calmness, a wrinkled Brow and  
 an uneasy Countenance; instead of Affability  
 and Courtesy, Haughtiness and Contempt of  
 Others, have taken Place.

Thus Vice, in several Forms, has often triumphed over the most amiable Virtues, by the Help of *Riches*: and thus have the truest *Enjoyments*, in human Life, been totally ruined and laid waste by Them. They are pretended sometimes to be sought after, to *satisfy* Men's Desires, and to *extinguish* Covetousness; and They only encrease those Desires, and add Fuel to the *Fire* within. They are really designed perhaps, by Some, to be made use of, for the Happiness of Others who want them: but they are seen to make Men more hard-hearted, than they were before, and less inclined to *Benevolence* and Good-nature. What numberless Temptations, of all Kinds, and these irresistible without the greatest Guard upon their Minds, doth the *Excess* of Riches administer to Men? All indeed do not fall by them: but all are in the extremest Danger. There are Exceptions: Otherwise, the World would be a Scene of *wicked Confusion* between *Covetousness*, and *Pride*:  
 And

And happy *They*, who make the Exceptions! SERM.  
 But, comparatively speaking, how *Few* are XV.  
*Those*, who have Strength of Soul enough to   
 know the only reasonable and noble Use of  
 that Distinction from their *Fellow-Creatures*,  
 which *Riches* create? Or, in the Words of  
 the *Text*, how *Few*, who are *full*; and do  
 not, some way or other, in their *Practice*, if  
 not in *Words*, deny God, and say, *Who is the*  
*Lord*? So great is the Danger, that immense  
*Riches* may draw off the Mind from all due  
 regard to *Virtue* and *Religion*; and expose it  
 to be fatally led away into such a State, as is  
 inconsistent with lasting Happiness here, or  
 hereafter; and is, indeed, the Reverse to all  
 that a Wise Man would wish for.

It is impossible to say all that might be  
 properly urged upon this Subject. But, Who-  
 ever seriously thinks upon such Observations  
 as have been now mentioned; and consults his  
 own Knowledge, or Experience; will find  
*Reason* enough not to desire, or pray for,  
 such a *Condition*, as *That* by which so many  
 have been ruined; and in which He himself  
 is sure of meeting with the most hazardous  
 Trials, and all those Temptations which are  
 most likely to prove fatal to his own Greatest  
 and Truest Interest.

SER M. II. Upon the next Head, *viz.* the *Inconveni-*  
 xv. *ences* generally seen to attend the *lowest* Condi-  
 ~~~~~~  
 tion of Life, I need not spend many Words: but
 must say something; That we may not avoid
 it, or pray against it, merely for worldly
 Reasons, because it is a Condition of Life irk-
 some and disagreeable to Flesh and Blood; but
 upon better and worthier Considerations; lest
 we should fall into *Sin*, by the *Temptations*
 peculiar to it. For this is the Reason in the
Text, upon which the Part of the Prayer re-
 lating to *Poverty*, is founded.

But here it cannot be improper, before I
 mention the *Vices peculiar* to this State, to
 observe, that, notwithstanding the wide Dis-
 tance and Difference of the *two Extremes*,
 there are great Sins common to Both: I mean
 that the *Lowest* of Men are seen to *prac-*
tise Many of the *same Vices*, which their *Su-*
periors sometimes do: as if They strove to re-
 semble the *Richest*, at least, in their *Wicked-*
ness; and to shew Themselves exactly like
 Them, in the Worst of their Features. The
 same *Profaneness* and *Defiance* of God; the
 same *Lewdness* and *Debauchery*; the same
Oaths and *Exccrations*; the same *Intempe-*
rance and *Drunkeness*, when Opportunity, or
 the Bounty of the *Rich*, gives leave; nay, the
 same *Insensibility*, and *Disregard* to the *Hap-*
 piness

pineness of the World about Them, are found SERM.
amongst the very *poorest* of all Men: The xv.
Same, I say, which are seen sometimes to ac-
company the *Riches* of *Others*.

There is *One* only trifling Difference, That the same Vices are practised, by *one* Sort, in a coarser and more sordid Manner, which are practised, by the *Other*, (perhaps not always,) in a more refined and delicate Way. *This* methinks, ought to shock Those of superior Rank; and, when They see that *Beggars* themselves can rise to the same Pitch of *Immorality*, must move Them, even from the *Pride* of keeping up their so much boasted Distinction, to abhor those Vices, in which the *Poorest* can equal, if not excel, Them.

But we must now add, that there are *Vices* peculiar to this *lowest* Condition. The *Tricks* and *Lies*; the *Forgeries*, and *Thefts*; the false *Testimonies*, and *Perjuries*; the *Violences*, and even *Murthers*, which the *Poorest* are, sorely and often, tempted to be guilty of, in order to support themselves in Life, as they pretend, are hardly to be enumerated. *Here*, likewise, there are *Exceptions*; and *Some* may be found, who preserve a Sense of God, and Religion, amidst the Pressures of the narrowest and most distressed Circumstances. But still the true

SERM. and just Reasons why a *Christian* should pray
 xv. against this State, are, Because he knows not
 ~~~~~ what the extremest Necessity may reduce  
 him to; and how little Strength he may find  
 himself to have, upon Trial, against such Temp-  
 tations, as extreme *Poverty* may expose him to.

If these *Crimes*, now charged upon the *Poor-  
 est* of Men, were in such Sense the *Works of  
 Darknes*, as not to be known, or seen, but  
 only suspected; This Accusation might be  
 deemed only an *Addition of Affliction* to their  
 distressful State. But, who does not know  
 and lament this Scene of Wickedness amongst  
*Them*? And if more Notice were taken of  
 it, it would be much happier both for  
*Themselves*, and their Neighbours. They would  
 have less Encouragement to make so detestable  
 a Figure in their low Estate; and human So-  
 ciety, less to fear from their *evil* Practises; and  
 the better Sort of them more Supports for their  
 Patience and Humility, under their Calami-  
 ties.

Having thus set before you the *Inconveni-  
 ences*, with respect to *Virtue* and Religion, which  
 are too generally seen to attend upon the two  
*Extreme Conditions of Life*, in this World;  
 what I have already said will naturally lead  
 our Thoughts to what I proposed, in the next  
 place, viz.

III. To shew the Happiness of the *middle Condition*; that State of *Life*, which is removed from the Trials and Hazards, attending the Superfluity of *Riches*; or the *Extremity* of *Poverty*: and blessed with Conveniences enough to place the Man out of the Reach of those *Evils*, to which Excess and Abundance, on one hand, and Penury and Want, on the other, are seen to expose Men. We are all weak and imperfect Creatures; too easily imposed upon, and misled, by the specious Outside of Things; or too easily driven, by the Sense of Pain and Want, into the Paths of Error and Sin. Therefore, the best Condition is That which has most Security in it. And *that* has most Security in it, which has fewest Temptations to Vice, and least Difficulty to surmount. And the Extremes of Fortune, in this State, being the most hazardous to *Virtue* and *Religion*; the *middle Condition* between the two Extremes, must, consequently, be what a Wise Man would choose, all Things considered: unless he could know the certain Event of Things, which in their own Nature are uncertain, and depend upon the voluntary Choice of free Agents. For it may be truly said of this *middle State*, That it doth not, by its natural Tendency, so much endanger Virtue, as ei-

S E R M.  
XV.


SERM. ther of the Two Extremes, of *Riches*, or *Po-*  
 xv. *verty*: not so much, on one hand, inclining  
 the Man to *deny God*, and say, *Who is the Lord?*  
 or, on the other hand, to *steal and take the*  
*Name of God in vain*, as it is expressed in the  
*Text*.

It must be granted, that *many* are the *Vices*  
 of that *Multitude* of Men, placed in this *mid-*  
*dle* Condition: the more inexcusable is their  
*Guilt* and *Folly*. But what would the same  
 Men have been, in greater Abundance, or  
 greater Narrowness, of Fortune? Much worse,  
 it is to be feared. If the lesser Temptations  
 they meet with, are able to draw them into so  
 pernicious Courses; what would those greater,  
 which they must have experienced in other  
 States, have done? But I will not multiply  
 Words. I hope, I have said enough to lead  
 you to see, and acknowledge, the Wisdom and  
 Reasonableness of the *Prayer*, in the *Text*,  
*Give me neither Poverty, nor Riches; feed me*  
*with Food convenient for me*.


IV. The Time will now only permit me to  
 consider some *Questions* that may arise up-  
 on what I have been recommending to your  
 Thoughts: which was the next Thing I pro-  
 posed to do.

1. It



1. It may still, without Impropriety, be asked, S E R M.  
 in return to all that has been said, whether *Riches*, XV.  
 even the Abundance of Them, are not a very   
 great Advantage to *Men* in this State, in many  
 Respects: and, therefore, whether, notwithstanding  
 the *evil Use* that has been made of them by  
 Many, and the *evil Practices* They naturally lead  
 to, They may not be desired by *Wise* and *Good*  
 Men. The true *Answer* to such a *Question*, I  
 think, is this, That there can be no Reasons  
 sufficient to move a considering Person to make  
 it the uneasy Care and Business of his Life to ob-  
 tain any *Riches* beyond what are necessary and  
 convenient for his own well-being, and for the  
 Support of those whom the Providence of God  
 has nearly allied to him; because it is far from being  
 certain that He shall not be tempted to make a bad  
 Use of them, as so many of his Fellow-Creatures  
 have done before him. The Excess of *Riches*  
 can be found an Advantage to no Man, 'till the  
 final Event has shewn, that He has actually made  
 a noble and Godlike Use of them, for the Be-  
 nefit and Advantage of the World about him.  
*We* are apt to think, perhaps, that *We* should  
 make such a Use of them: And it may be  
 so. But we cannot certainly promise this to  
 Ourselves. We may fall by the same Snares  
 that have entangled so many before Us: and We  
 know not the full Power of a *Temptation*, 'till


SERMON. we have tried it. And therefore, I cannot think  
 XV. that it would become us to make it the great  
 Object of our Wishes, or our Labours, to be  
*Rich* above what the Necessities and Conveni-  
 ences, proper for our Stations, require. And if we  
 walk by this Rule, it is most likely, that what the  
*Providence* of GOD sends beyond this, may prove  
 a *Blessing*; and not a *Curse*, as it often hath proved,  
 when Men have solicited Heaven and Earth, as  
 it were, for it, and spent their Nights and Days in  
 the Pursuit of it. The only Advantage that  
 the Superfluity of Riches gives to any one is,  
 that it opens a larger Field to his Generosity  
 and Beneficence; that it makes his Charity  
 conspicuous, and his Humility lovely; and adds  
 a Beauty to all his Virtues. But who can tell  
 that He shall certainly be the happy Man, of  
 Virtue and Faith enough, to *possess this World,*  
*as though he possessed it not; and to use it,*  
*as not abusing it?* We cannot indeed, avoid  
 rejoicing in any of the *Good Things* of this  
 World, which are granted Us. But, if we  
 be *Christians*, we cannot rejoice in them any  
 farther, than as we are resolved to dedicate  
 them to the Glory of Him who gives them to  
 Us; to the Purposes He recommends to Us;  
 and to the Happiness of the rest of our Fellow-  
 Creatures.

2. Another *Question* may arise in the Minds S E R M.  
of Some, concerning the other Extreme of *Po-* XV.  
*verty*; whether it be not often represented, and   
even in the *Holy Scriptures*, as a Sort of a  
Blessed State, and a Title, as it were, to the  
Favor of God; and the Rewards of Heaven;  
and therefore, be not truly worthy of a wise  
Man's Choice? But this again can be judged of,  
only by the Event. If Persons behave them-  
selves in that Condition, with a constant Re-  
gard to Virtue and Religion; with a noble  
Courage and Patience; and with a due Sub-  
mission to the Providence of God; there is  
no doubt, it opens a Door to much greater  
Degrees of Happiness to come. But it is not  
the Part of a *wise Man* to venture *eternal*  
*Happiness* upon what may *possibly* improve  
Him; but rather to wish for what is least  
liable to Temptations, and least hazardous to  
his Virtue, in this State of Probation. When  
we are placed by our great *Governour* in a  
dangerous Post; our Business is to maintain  
it nobly and courageously: but it is *Pre-*  
*sumption*, and not *Duty*, to desire and court  
unnecessary Hazards. We seldom come off  
without the Loss of Honour, from *Dangers* of  
our own choosing: and therefore, our Lord him-  
self teaches us to pray, *Lead us not into Tem-*  
*ptation*. So that, though the *Extremes* of human  
Life,

SERM. Life, on both Hands, may prove honourable  
 xv. and glorious to Those who can bear them with  
 due Temper, and resist all the Temptations  
 which They administer; yet no one, who  
 thinks what human Nature, at present, is,  
 would either *labour*, or *pray*, himself into a  
 Condition, which Multitudes of Examples be-  
 fore his Eyes may make him fear, He shall not  
 go through, without some considerable Loss, or  
 Wound, to his *Virtue*, and *Religion*.

3. If you now ask, what is that *Prayer*, in  
 Relation to the Things of this World, which  
 it becomes You to put up to the supreme Govern-  
 our of all Things; I answer, that the Wisdom  
 of the Prayer in the Text is recommended to  
 You, tho' not made an absolute Duty. This  
 will shew You that You may, with blameless  
 Hearts, and in express Words, pray against the  
 hazardous *Extremes* of superfluous *Riches*, and  
 the lowest *Poverty*: and that when you so pray,  
 out of regard to the greater Security of your  
 moral Practice; lest the *Trials* in those two  
*Extremes* should be too powerful for You;  
 You are sure, You act according to Duty, by  
 making the Considerations of *Religion* the  
 Ground of your *Prayer*.

If You would not be outdone, or put to Shame,  
 even by the *Heathens*, let One of the wisest  
 that

that ever appeared amongst them, lead your S E R M.  
Thoughts to a Prayer, a little more general, but XV.  
near a-kin to that in the Text. You may   
learn it from One of his *Scholars*, who, in his  
Address to GOD, requested the supreme Being  
to *grant* Him whatever was *truly Good* for  
Him, though He should be so blind him-  
self, as *not* to ask it: and to *deny* Him what-  
ever was not really so, but hurtful, though  
He himself should be so ill-instructed, or weak,  
as to beg it of Him earnestly and importu-  
nately : or to this Effect.

But if You would act in this *Case*, as *Chris-  
tians*, which your Duty requires of You ;  
You must strictly observe that most *reasonable*  
Form of *Prayer*, which your *great Master*  
dictated to his *Disciples*. In this, He effectually  
teaches You *not* to pray for Superfluity of  
*Riches*, unbounded *Possessions*, numerous *Servants*,  
splendid *Equipages*, or the like: but allows You,  
(I may say, *commands* You) to shew your De-  
pendence upon the supreme Being, by *praying*,  
*in express Words*, for Your *daily Bread* only ;  
leaving all the rest to Providence, and your  
own careful Endeavours, within the Bounds  
of his Holy Religion. This Direction of our  
*Blessed Lord* is an infallible Guide to all his  
Followers, upon this Subject.

4. Lastly,

SERM.

XV.



4. Lastly, if You should ask, what is that exact *Competence*, which You are still permitted to desire, and seek after; I must answer, not only That it is beyond *my* Power to fix it; but that I believe it impossible for Any One to settle *That* precisely, by *one* Measure, which requires *Many*, according to the several Stations of Life, allotted to the several Inhabitants of our World. To say, *It is always Something more than a Man has already*, is the Voice of *insatiable Avarice*; witty perhaps, but sporting itself upon a most serious Subject.

There is *One* Way, I think, of coming near to the Truth; unless it be quite stopped up by the Resolution of Men to *deceive their own Souls*. It is certain, that Almighty God cannot be so rigorous, as to make any Man's *Salvation* depend upon a mere Nicety, in which the most honest Mind may be mistaken. And it is as certain that He will not be *mocked*, or put off, with the poor Excuses of Many, who have it in their Power to know their *Duty*, and their *Happiness*. All Men, who will consider, may know well enough, what Manner of Life is required of them, in *Decency*, and Compliance with *Custom*, according to that Station, and that Rank, in which they are placed. And by the Maintenance of *This*, without *Injustice*, or *Intemperance*,

*perance*, it is evident, They do not sin; Nay, SERM. that They contribute to the good Subsistence XV. of many honest and industrious Persons in the World. They may also know, if they have a Mind to it, who They are, whom, in Conscience, they are obliged to provide for; and what is sufficient to place them in a proper Station, in the World; the most likely to prove happy to Them, at the End. And They all must be sensible that, when These *two* Points are tolerably secured, What is over and above, is then used, and improved, with Glory and Honour, when it is made a Fund for *Charity*, and *Beneficence*. If Men will study all Evasions to flatter, and impose upon, Themselves; Who can help it? But if They will deal sincerely and honestly by Themselves, in this Point, there is no need of a *Prophet*, to say to Any *One* of Them who are concerned, *Thou art the Man*. Every One will say it to himself. And this is all that can be done, by Us, in a Case of this Sort; to apply strongly to Themselves, and to leave it upon their Consciences, as they will answer it at the solemn Day of Account, whether They do not inwardly know that They are happy in that *Competency*, and good Estate, which a Wise Man ought to wish for. This therefore, is justly left to their own *Determination*.

SERM. To conclude, Let us all, in the Sincerity  
xv. of our Hearts, make the best Use We can,  
for our own Happiness, and the Good of Others,  
of what has been said; and shew a *Conduēt*,  
worthy of *Men* and of *Christians*, in that Con-  
dition of Life, whatever it may be, in which  
our Great and Good Governour shall think fit  
to place Us.



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*The GOOD SAMARITAN.*

S E R M O N X V I.

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LUKE X. 37.


*Then said Jesus unto Him, Go, and do Thou likewise.*

**W**HETHER the Verses before this S E R M.  
contain a *Parable*, invented for In- XVI.  
struction ; or a real Matter of *Fact* ;   
it imports little. The *Words* I have read to  
You, are a *Lesson* drawn from the foregoing  
Story : The Occasion of which was this. A  
certain *Lawyer*, one who studied the *Law* of  
*Moses*, and exercised himself in all the *Questi-*  
*ons* belonging to that *Law*, having heard that  
our blessed *Lord* professed to shew a sure and  
infallible Way to *Life* and Happiness, came to  
him to try what Answer he would give to that  
important Question, *What shall I do to inherit*  
*eternal Life* ? Our Lord's Answer was short  
and plain ; *viz.* that the *Summ* of all that Re-  
ligion

SE R M. *ligion*, which can make us acceptable to God,  
 XVI. is to *love God above all Things, and our Neigh-*  
 ~~~~~ *bour as Ourselves.* The *Lawyer* seems here  
 not to be at all concerned about the *Former* ;
 not doubting, perhaps, but that he had al-
 ways sufficiently demonstrated his *Love to God* ;
 by his strict Observance of all the *Ceremonies*
 of the *Mosaical Law*. And, hoping to justify
 himself in the Matter of *Love to his Neighbour*
 also, desires to know of *Jesus*, Who that
Neighbour is, whom he is thus to *love as*
Himself.

Here We must observe, that, at this Time,
 the *Jews* were in Nothing more corrupted,
 than in their Notions about the Persons, on
 whom they were to bestow any Tokens of
Good-will. They had, in a Manner, forgot
 that strict Bond of *Nature*, by which all Men
 are allied to one another : and all the World
 took Notice how stiff and narrow in their Re-
 gards to Others ; and how void of all *Charity*,
 They were grown. They were come to that
 pass, that they denied the common Civilities,
 and the common Conveniences of human Life,
 to Strangers, and Persons of other Religions.
 We are told by some, that they would not
 shew them so much as the Way to any Place
 they were going to ; or direct them to a Foun-
 tain where they might quench their Thirst.

Here,

Here therefore, our *Blessed Lord* had a good S E R M.
 Opportunity of opposing this narrow and inhu- XVI.
 mane Spirit that was gone out amongst them: 
 And We may be sure, He was glad to lay hold
 on it; as he came into the World to implant
 other Sort of Notions in the Minds of Men,
 and to make their Charity as like to that of
Almighty God himself, as it could be. In an-
 swer, therefore, to this *Enquiry*, and to teach
 Him who made it, *Whom* He was to look upon
 as his *Neighbour*; as an Object of that *Love*,
 he was speaking of; and in order to do this in
 the most moving and affecting Manner, he sets
 his Duty plainly before his Eyes in a *Story*,
 here related.

A certain Man, He does not say, whether
 a *Jew*, or a *Stranger*. If a *Jew*, the good Na-
 ture of the *Samaritan*, presently spoken of, was
 so much the more remarkable; there being a
 consummate *Hatred* betwixt the *Two Nations*:
 If a *Stranger*, the Compassion of the *Samari-
 tan* was peculiarly fit to be recommended to
 the Imitation of the *Jew*; in order to teach
 Him that universal Benevolence, from which
 He was utterly alienated. This Man, *in a
 Journey from Jerusalem to Jericho*, fell amongst
Thieves, who robbed him, and used him so ill,
 that he was left *half dead*. Such an Object,
 lying helpless, and in a most inconvenient
 Y Place,

SER M. Place, one would have thought enough to move
 XVI. the Compassion of the greatest *Barbarians*.

And yet we find Compassion sunk so low amongst the *Jews*, that our *Saviour* thought their *Behaviour* in such Cases fitly represented by what follows. A *Priest*, and a *Levite*, Persons peculiarly employed in the Service of God, and devoted to the external Offices of their *Religion*, had forgot *Humanity* so far, as not to be touched with the Sight. The *One* saw him, at a Distance, as appears; the *Other* came, and looked on him: but *Both* of them passed by on the other Side. What Pretences they had for this Neglect, our *Lord* does not say. Perhaps, They were in Haste, upon Business; or going to attend upon the *Sacrifices*, or other Offices of the *Temple*; not understanding, nor feeling, the *Force* of that God-like Saying, *I will have Mercy, and not Sacrifice*. Or, perhaps, They found him to be a *Stranger*, a *Heathen*; and so fit rather for their Aversion, than their *Pity*. Something, or other, They had to lay their Consciences asleep: and were, without Doubt, glad of any Excuse, or Evasion, to that Purpose.

Let us see what follows. *But* a certain *Samaritan*, *One* of that *Nation* which mixed *Idolatri* with the Service of God; which *worshipped* they *knew not* what; of that *Nation* which was hated and despised
 by

by the *Jews*, to such a Degree that They had no Dealings with Them; a *Samaritan*, when he saw this miserable Object, was moved with *Compassion*; shewed him all the Love imaginable; performed all the good Offices that his present Condition could demand of him; and administred every Thing that his Necessity required. The *Cruelty*, and unbecoming *Barbarity*, of Those who neglected Him, was so apparent; and the Beauty and Loveliness of this Action of the *Samaritan* so bright and evident; that our *Saviour* doubted not to make the *Lawyer* himself judge, which of these *Three* had fulfilled that Command, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*; and which of these *Examples* was most fitted to direct him in the Performance of his Duty. And when he had answered, in favour of the *Samaritan*, that it was *He*, who had done the Duty of a *Neighbour* to this distressed Person: *Jesus* recommends this Pattern to him, in these Words, *Go, and do thou likewise*. Imitate this *Samaritan*. Look upon this Example, and You will not be at a Loss to know, *Who is your Neighbour*: but You will lay it down for a Truth, that every Person in the World, of what *Country*, of what *Profession*, of what *Religion* soever, who is in Necessity, and stands in Need of your Assistance, and whom you can assist

S E R M. without *Injury to Yourself*, or to Those for
 XVI. whom You are more nearly concerned; That
 every such Man has a *Title* to your *Beneficence* and
Charity; That You have the same *Relation* to
Him, that the *Samaritan* had to the distressed
 Person before-mentioned; That He is one
 of those *Neighbours* whom God requires you
 to *love as yourself*; and to do unto *Him*, as you
 might reasonably expect Others to do unto
You, were you in his Circumstances. This
 was the main Design, and principal Intent of
 this History.

But, because in such *Histories*, or *Parables*,
 there are often *Many* other Things to be learnt
 and observed, besides the *Main Point*; I shall,
 therefore, in my following Discourse, make
 such *Observations*, as offer themselves from
 every Part of this *Story*, as well as from the
 chief *Scope* of it: but yet I shall name None
 but such as We may probably enough suppose
 to have been intended, and hinted at, by our
Lord. For Instance,

I. We cannot but observe, that a Whole
Nation of Men; Men who have, and think
 They have, the greatest Opportunities of *Reli-
 gious Knowledge*; Nay, Men who are peculi-
 arly devoted to the *Study* and public *Offices*
 of Religion, may be often grossly ignorant of
 some of the plainest, and most essential, *moral*
Duties

Duties of It: and, accordingly, their *Practice* S E R M. may be most unreasonable, and inexcusable. XVI.

II. We may observe, how glad many Persons are, of any *Excuse*, or *Pretense*, in order to avoid the greatest Objects of *Charity*, which will cost them a little Trouble, or a little Money.

III. From this *Story*, related by our *Lord* himself, we may observe, that Men of an Orthodox Faith, with respect to *God*; and of a true, and a *reveled*, *Religion*, may sometimes learn the *Practice* of a very great and substantial *Duty* from Men of an unsound Faith, and a *false Religion*; even from *Idolaters*, *Samaritans*, and *Pagans*.

IV. Lastly, the principal Point intended by our *Lord*, in this *Story*, being to recommend *Goodness* and *Love* to all Men; I shall say something upon the great Duty of universal *Charity*, and a most comprehensive *Compassion*; and our strict *Obligation* to the *Practice* of it.

I. From this *History*, and the *Occasion* of it, we may observe, that a whole Nation of Men, Men who have, and think They have, the greatest Opportunities of *religious Knowledge*; nay, Men who are peculiarly devoted to the *Study* of *Religion*, and the *Offices* belonging to *God's Worship*, may sometimes, be grossly ignorant

SERM. of some of the plainest and important *Duties*
 XVI. of *Religion*; and accordingly, their Practice may
 be most unreasonable and inexcusable.

Here was the whole *People* of the *Jews*, to whom God had given a supernatural *Revelation*; and, with this *Revelation* in their Hands, not a *Man* to be found amongst them, who was not of a narrow and confined Spirit; who had any Notion of a *Neighbour*, or of Persons to whom any good Offices were due, out of their own *Society*, and *Church*: not a *Man*, who understood, or practised, the great Duty of *Charity*, though it has the clearest and most evident Dictates of *Nature*, on its Side; Or, who had Generosity enough to perform the commonest Offices of *Civility* or *Humanity*, to *Any*, but a *Jew*. This was what the *Heathen Poets*, and *Historians*, often severely condemned, and ridiculed Them for. Here was a Person, who had made the *Law of Moses* his Study, who knew not how to expound that *second* great Precept of *loving his Neighbour as himself*; but, as it appears, stood in Need of some farther Instruction, in this Point; how willing soever he appeared to justify Himself. And, in our *Saviour's* Answer, who always had regard to *Truth* and *Decency*, a *Priest* and a *Levite*, Attendants upon the Service of *God* in the *Temple*, and punctual, without Doubt, in every Ceremony
 and

and Mode of Worship, are represented as inexcusably guilty in one of the chief Branches of practical Religion; passing by the greatest Object of Pity imaginable, a Man in the utmost Distress, standing in need of their immediate Assistance, and, in all probability, *perishing* without it. So far from embracing such an Opportunity of doing good, and exercising those god-like Virtues of *Charity* and *Compassion*; that They are spoken of, as wholly unmoved at the Sight, and glad to get out of the Way of that Mercy, which might cost Them a little Money or Trouble.


What a Devastation of All that is good in human Nature, must there be supposed; when it can forget its own manifold Wants and Necessities; put off its own tender Affections; throw off all that is soft and apt to be moved in it: and contract, in its stead, the Roughness of a Brute, and the Hardness of a Rock? And how low must That Man have been sunk beneath *Himself*, who could forget that He himself might have been the Man that *fell amongst Thieves*, and was *left half dead*; and not recollect what would have been the *Anguish of his own Soul*, in such a Condition; and what Regard He himself would justly have expected to his own Cries and Wounds, in so miserable a Case? Yet thus it

SERM. was, in our *Saviour's* Time: otherwise, He
 XVI. would not have had the Thought of represent-
 ~~~~~ ing it, in this Light.

II. The next Observation from this *Story*, was, That many Persons have so far hardened Themselves, in Covetousness, and Insensibility, that they are glad of any Pretense or Excuse, for neglecting the most moving Objects of Pity, if they are likely to put them to a little Trouble, or Charge: nay, That they will often, rather than be at the Expence of a little Compassion, arm Themselves against it without any Pretense; avoid whatever seems to demand their Assistance; and fly from all Opportunities of doing good.

The *Priest*, when he saw this poor Man in the most wretched Condition; fearing perhaps, it might be an *Object* moving enough to melt him into *Pity*, seems to have been contented with the Sight at a Distance, and *passed by on the other Side*. The *Levite* came, and looked upon him; viewed his *Condition*; was Witness to his Wounds and his Distress; saw him to be utterly unable to help himself, and destined to Death without present Assistance: and yet, was proof against such a Spectacle of Misery; shut up his Bowels of *Compassion* against Him, and *passed by* also *on the other Side*.


And,

And, as We can observe of *other* Men, S E R M.  
 That, though they abound in *Riches*, and all XVI.  
 the Superfluities of *Life*, They yet are willing   
 to be *ignorant* of the *Wants* of their Neigh-  
 bours; or, hard-hearted enough to deny  
 them the Relief, which They could easily  
 grant them: So, let us look into Ourselves,  
 and see, if we also are not guilty of this same  
 Wickedness, Ourselves, in some Degree, or  
 other. How many Petitioners, such as really  
 want and deserve our Help, have we been  
 deaf to? How often have we avoided a Person  
 in distress, merely because we knew, or sus-  
 pected, He would beg our Assistance; and  
 how often have We *passed by on the other Side*,  
 upon a distant Sight of him? Have We not  
 sometimes found Ourselves but too willing  
 to take no Notice of the Opportunities, put  
 into our Hands, of feeding the Hungry, cloth-  
 ing the Naked, relieving the Sick, and Afflicted,  
 releasing the Captive, or Prisoner? All these,  
 whenever they present themselves to us, are  
 our *Neighbours*; and have a Title to our  
*Love*, and to, the Effects of this *Love*, all the  
 good Offices we can afford them. And when  
 we refuse to hear the Cries of the Unhappy,  
 and to administer that Relief, which we  
 have Opportunity, and Ability, to administer;  
 Or, to supply the Wants of Those who pre-  
 sent themselves to us with the certain Marks  
 of

SERM. of Distress and Misery upon them, We do, in  
 XVI. our several Degrees, approach to the Barba-  
 rity, and imitate the Cruelty, of Those Persons,  
 in the Story now before Us, who could see a  
 Man upon the very brink of Death, destitute  
 of all Comfort; and yet not be moved so far  
 as to afford him the least Assistance.

III. I proceed now to a *Third* Observation, which, I said, we might make from the same *History*; viz. That Men of an *orthodox Faith* with respect to God, and of a true *Religion*, may often learn the Practice of a very great and substantial Duty from Men of an *unsound Faith*, and false *Religion*.

Our blessed *Lord*, in his Discourse with the *Samaritan Woman*, (*John iv<sup>th</sup>*) in express Words, preferred the *Jewish Religion* far before the *Samaritan*. *We know what we worship; Ye worship Ye know not what*. They of *Samaria* had many *Idolatries* mixed with that Worship of the true God, which they retained. The *Jews* worshiped God according to the Law of *Moses*; whose Instructions They received as the Dictates of God himself: And by these Instructions They were led to the strictest Notions of the *Unity* of the *Supreme Being*; and of the *Perfections* of his *Nature*. But, notwithstanding all this, We find,

find, in the *History* before Us, that our *Saviour* SERM.  
 did not scruple to propose to the Imitation of XVI.  
 the *Jews*, in a most important Point of prac-   
 tical *Religion*, the *Example* of an *idolatrous*  
*Samaritan*, in order to throw Shame upon  
 their sordid and cramp Notions of *Charity*;  
 and to inspire them with a pious Emulation,  
 and a Resolution, not to be outdone, in the  
 most God-like Virtue, by Those, whom They  
 so much out-did in their Faith, and Worship.

I know not how it comes to pass, That  
 the very Things which God designs to make  
*Some Men better than Others*, often prove the  
 Occasions, through the Perverseness of these  
 Men themselves, of making them *Worse*.  
 That peculiar *Relation* which God appeared  
 to have to the *Jews*; that *Love* He shewed  
 to their Forefathers; the fighting their Battles;  
 the establishing Them in a good Country;  
 and, above all, the giving Them the Law  
 from Heaven, and leading them into the  
 Knowledge of himself: All these Favours,  
 instead of making them generous and be-  
 neficent, served to sowr their Spirits; to con-  
 tract their Souls; and to shrink their Affec-  
 tions into a narrower Compass. So ungrateful a  
 Return did They make to these Blessings, that  
 They were always reflecting upon the *worse*  
 Condition of the *Nations* around Them; how

S E R M. little other Mortals were esteemed and favour-  
 XVI. ed by God, in comparison with Themselves;  
 and therefore, how fit to be despised and neglected. And how many Men may we meet with, or hear of, in our own Days, who value themselves upon the mere outward Profession of This or That *Religion*; who are often thanking God that They are Members of the *best*, or only, *Church* in the World; whilst they shamefully neglect many Instances of Morality, which the very *Heathens* excell in; and are boasting of their *Faith*, whilst They are inexcusably wicked in their *Practice*?

What Cruelties have been exercised by some called *Christians*, upon *Infidels*, merely for worldly Ends; and these much the more to be abhorred for being coloured over with the specious Name of *Religion*? Cruelties, which are said to have created in those *Infidels* Themselves an irreconcilable Hatred to the very Name of *Christ*. To speak more plainly, what Methods have been taken by Those of the *Romish Church*, to plant what They call *Christianity*, where it was not; or to maintain, and reform it to their own Minds, where it was? *Methods*, that would make the Ears of an honest *Heathen* to tingle; so much beyond the common Bounds of *Barbarity* itself, that They can hardly be expressed; but will always,

ways, I fear, be remembered to the Infamy of SERM.  
 the *Christian* Name, by Those who know of XVI.  
 no other *Gospel*, but what such Men have  
 preached. And are there not, amongst *Those*  
 who utterly condemn this Conduct, *Some*  
 to be found, so intent upon the Goods of  
 this World, as to forget those Duties in  
 which the Vigour and Life of *Religion* con-  
 sists; *Justice*, and *Charity*; and to retain little  
 more, than so much of the Profession of Re-  
 ligion as may help on their worldly Designs?

But though God certainly preferred the  
*Worship* of the *Jew*, before That of the *Sama-  
 ritan*; yet, we need not doubt to say that He  
 was much better pleased with the good and cha-  
 ritable *Samaritan*, than with the inhuman and  
 unmerciful *Jew*. Nay, we may go farther,  
 and take occasion from hence to affirm that a  
 Good God will make all just Allowances for  
 the *Errors* of every such *charitable* Man;  
 but *None* for the wilful Wickedness of One  
 who professes a true and holy Religion, and  
 transgresses the plainest Laws of Nature, and  
 Reason, and of all *Religions* in the World.  
*This* admits of no Excuse: the *Other* may, in  
 the Eyes of *Him*, who sees the bottom of all  
 Hearts, and knows the Spring from whence all  
 the Errors in the World proceed.

So also, though it be certain that a *Christi-  
 an* of a *Right Faith* is more acceptable to *Him*,  
 than

S E R M. than *One* who is not so, where there is no-  
 XVI. thing to make it otherwise; yet, We may be as  
 certain, That an honest *Heathen* is much more  
 acceptable to him, than a dishonest and deceitful  
*Christian*; and that a charitable and good-natured  
*Pagan* has a better Title to his Favour, than a  
 cruel and barbarous *Christian*; let him be  
 never so orthodox in his Faith. Nay, for  
 the sake of the *Gospel* itself, whatever that  
 Part of *Christians* do, who, in the heat of their  
 Zeal for enlarging the Bounds of their *Church*,  
 seem to think it a Duty to forget all the  
 Softnesses of Human Nature, and to practise the  
 utmost Inhumanity; Let *Us*, (who pretend to  
 be reformed from them) have no hand in cast-  
 ing such an indeleble Blot upon our Holy Reli-  
 gion: and, while our Mouths are making a good  
*Confession of Faith*, let not our Lives be full of  
 those Vices which the *Gospel* came to extirpate.  
 And, particularly, Let that extensive *Charity*,  
 and unbounded Love and Beneficence, adorn our  
 Lives, which make so great a Part of, and add  
 so great a Lustre to, that Divine Institution.  
 To this End,

IV. The principal Thing intended by our  
*Lord*, in the Story we are now considering,  
 being to recommend *Goodness* and *Love* to-  
 wards all Men, let us turn our Thoughts to  
 this great Duty of *Universal Charity*, and our  
 strict Obligation to the constant *Practice* of it.

On



In order to fix the Nature of this, it is proper SERM.  
 here again to call to mind, That this universal XVI.  
*Charity* is not designed to break in upon those *Du-*  
*ties* which we owe to *Ourselves*, our *Parents*,  
 our *Children*, our *Friends*, nay, and our *Acquaint-*  
*ance*. It is not in the Power of Any Man to  
 assist every One in distress: and *Nature* directs  
 Him to prefer *These* before *Strangers*, when  
 they come in Competition, and are in the  
 same Degree of Want, or Distress. Accord-  
 ingly, our *Saviour* here chooses the Instance  
 of *One* in the greatest Danger; at the very Point  
 of Death; certainly perishing without present  
 Help. And had the Case been thus, that the  
*Priest*, and the *Levite*, were going to a *Fa-*  
*ther*, or a *Child*, or a *Friend*, in the same  
 Necessity; and had it not in their Power to  
 assist Both; We may venture to say that our  
*Lord* would not have blamed Them for neg-  
 lecting a *Stranger* for *One* in a much nearer  
 Relation to Them, and in the same Condi-  
 tion. And therefore, the Doctrine taught in  
 this History, is rightly understood to be this,  
 That Whoever of the human Race stands in  
 need of our Assistance; whom we can relieve  
 without Injury to *Ourselves*; or without neg-  
 lecting *Others*, in the same Condition, whom  
 we much more ought to relieve; has a Title  
 to our Benevolence and Kindness: Or is *our*  
*Neighbour*, whom we are to love as *Our-*  
*selves*;

SERM. *felves*; and whom we are willingly to com-  
 XVI. fort, support, and assist. And this We are  
 plainly obliged to do, as we are *Men*, of the same  
 Class and Order of Beings; as we are obliged to  
 imitate Almighty GOD; and as we are *Christi-*  
*ans*, to be guided and judged by the Gospel.

1. As we are *Men*; and, as such, Partakers of  
 the same Nature; subject to the same Accidents;  
 placed in this World upon the same Conditions,  
 with Other Men. Look up to the common Cre-  
 ator of all, and the common Father, from whom  
 all had their original; and there is no Differ-  
 ence. The Rich, and the Poor; the Happy, and  
 the Miserable; the Fortunate, and Unfortunate;  
 are of one Stock. God created the One and  
 the Other: and placed them in the same World;  
 where None of them, not the greatest, and  
 richest, and most *Powerful* of them all, can  
 be secure that he shall not, one Day or other,  
 come to be the least, the poorest, and most  
 distressed, of Men. How happy soever and  
 flourishing we are to day; how prosperously  
 soever Things succeed with us; not many Years  
 may, perhaps, make a great Alteration. A sin-  
 gle Act of great Imprudence; an unexpected  
*Loss*; a very calamitous Accident; Envy and Ma-  
 lice of *Others*: One, or more, of *These*, may  
 overturn All; and deprive us of those good  
 Things, a small Part of which We now  
 think

think it hard to afford our Brethren in their Ne-  
 cessities. Let not, therefore, the *Wants* of your  
*Neighbour*, nor your own *Riches*, make such a  
 Difference between You, in your own Eyes,  
 as to recommend him to your Contempt.  
 Neglect not *Him*, in his distressfull State,  
 whom God has created with the same Fa-  
 culties you possess, and placed in the same  
 World which you inhabit. Remember that  
 a small Time may, possibly, alter the Face  
 of Things, in so uncertain a *State* as This:  
 and You will always make *their* Case Your  
 own. Call to Mind often that it is not for  
 Men to live without mutual Help, and good  
 Offices: and that the *Richest* of all do, in-  
 deed, owe so much to the Labour and In-  
 dustry of the *Poor*, that They may be glad  
 to supply the Wants of the *Distressed*, when  
 their own Industry and Labour cannot. The  
 more frequently You entertain yourselves with  
 such Thoughts, the greater and more constant  
 will be your Regard to your *Fellow-Creatures*  
 around You.

SE R M,  
 XVI.

2. We are obliged to practise this universal  
 Charity, as we are obliged to *imitate* God him-  
 self. That great and all-perfect Being wants not  
 the Assistance of any Men; nor can ever possib-  
 ly want it: and yet He has not neglected, or des-  
 pised, *their* Necessities. Those Blessings, the

SERM. Administration of which he reserves to himself, how common and universal are They?

~ His Sun shines, and his Rain falls, indifferently on All: and why then should not those Blessings which He has entrusted with the Rich Men of this World, be freely and universally distributed, as the Necessities of poor Men require? What would the Richest of them all do, were the Supreme Creator, and Governour, of all things, quite Regardless of Them, and of their Well-being here below? They could not breath one Moment without his Concurrence; and he affords it them. They could not live, without his Sun, and his Air, and his Rain; and all these, by his Command, contribute to their Support. And this is a most powerful Argument, That, when Others want what they have in Abundance, and what they can spare; They ought, with all Readiness to communicate it to their Fellow-Creatures. To refuse to do this, is indeed a most ungrateful Return to that GOD who shews himself, every Day and Hour, so good to Them. For to refuse to imitate Him in this, is not to thank him. Nay, it may justly be taken as an affront to Himself, that, when He has communicated to Them of the Fullness of his own Happiness, They have so little a Sense of the Beauty of such Benevolence

volence, as not to think it worthy of the most natural Regard of Imitation. But,

3. We are obliged to this Beneficence, as we are *Christians*, to be guided now, and judged hereafter, by the *Gospel* We pretend to embrace. In *that* We are plainly taught, That whatever we have, over and above the Necessities and Conveniences of Ourselves, and those in whom we are most nearly concerned, is intrusted to Us for the Use and Benefit of Those who want it. *To see our Brother have need, and to shut up our Bowels of Compassion against him*, is condemned by the same Gospel, as a Sin : And if in *Sins* there be *Degrees*; We may say that *This* is One of the most unpardonable of all. The Duty of *loving*, that is, *doing Good* to, all our *Fellow-Creatures*, when their *Distresses* call upon Us, is so often *there* repeated, and inculcated, that it is needless to be more particular. The *Example* set before Us, in *That*, is *Christ Jesus*, who was never weary of exerting his *Power* for the Relief, and Comfort, and Support, and Happiness, of all the World around him. The Account *there* given of the Day of *Judgment*, and the great and solemn Audit to come, turns all upon *Charity*; and represents the Case in this Manner. Have you fed the *Hungry*, clothed the *Naked*, enter-

SERM. tained the *Stranger*, visited and relieved the  
 XVI. *Sick*, supplied the Wants of all Mankind, as  
 ♪ far as you were able? If *You* have; You are  
 'Those happy Disciples, to whom our *Lord* will  
 say, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the*  
*Kingdom prepared for you, from the Foundation*  
*of the World.* If *You* have not; the *Other*  
 Sentence is declared to belong to you, *Depart*  
*from me, ye cursed, into everlasting Fire.* What  
 can be a greater *Demonstration* of how great  
 Value, in the Eyes of God, this *universal*  
*Charity* is, and of what a heinous Nature the  
 contrary Vice is? And what can be a greater  
 Argument to Us, to avoid the *One*, and practise  
 the *Other*?

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*Of the DUTY of CHRISTIANS  
under AFFLICTIONS.*

S E R M O N X V I I .

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H E B R E W S xii. I I .

*Now, no Chastening for the present, seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceful Fruit of Righteousness, unto them which are exercised thereby.*

**T**HIS, and the foregoing Verses, certainly had reference to that Scene of S E R M. XVII. Persecution, to which the Profession and Practice of the *Christian Religion* exposed Men, in the *first Ages of the Gospel*. But the Application of them is so natural to the common Calamities and Troubles which Men meet with in this World, even when the outward Profession of their Religion is secure and easy; that We may, very well, take Occasi-

SERM. on from them to discourse of those *Afflictions*,  
 XVII. which Mortals seem to be born to, in this  
 State; the severe Trials of their Faith and  
 Trust in God, *here*; and the great Instru-  
 ments of Reward and Glory, *hereafter*, to  
 Those who bear them as They ought to do.  
 And, in order to treat this important Subject,  
 in a manner which may be most useful to the  
 Persons most deeply concerned in it,

I. I shall observe the little Reason we have, any of us all, to expect to pass through this World without our Portion of Trouble and Affliction.


II. I shall endeavour to shew after what Manner we ought to bear those *Afflictions*, which may be said to be our almost unavoidable Portion.

III. I shall point out the great and prevailing *Arguments* there are, to engage us to bear them after the best and most reasonable Manner. And

IV. I shall consider the great and unspeakable Advantages of these *Afflictions* to Those who are exercised therein, and who undergo them after this good and becoming Manner.

I. I shall



I. I shall observe the little Reason we have, SERM.  
 any of us, to expect to pass through this World XVII.  
 without our Portion of Trouble and *Afflic-*  
*tion.* 

Look abroad into the present State of Things, and extend your View as far as That will permit: and find out, if it be possible, those happy Men, who meet with no Bitterness; no Misfortune; no Calamity, in this World. You would think, perhaps, that Such might most successfully be sought for, amongst the Virtuous and Best Part of Mankind. But *These*, if you will believe their own Words, have been most exposed to the Calamities and Misfortunes of this uncertain State; and to have been exercised the most severely with Trials and Afflictions, here below. It has been, in all Ages, a Sort of a Reproach which They themselves have made to *Providence*, that their Virtue, though pursued and cultivated sincerely, has only, at present, seemed to entitle them to more Troubles, and more Misfortunes, than *Others* have experienced; and that ill Success, and cross Accidents, have attended *Them*, when the wicked Part of the World have seemed to be at Rest, and to have all that their Hearts could wish to enjoy.

SERM. XVII. But, though this has been said, in the Heat and Passion, if I may say so, of *Good Men*; yet it cannot, in any tolerable Sense, be proved that *Wickedness* is any more a Security against Troubles and Afflictions, in this State, than true Goodness and Holiness. It may, indeed, often prosper, so far as to procure outward Grandeur, and immense Riches: But what is that to the State of Mind within, which is the Seat of Happiness? How many *Projects* does the *wicked* Man often frame, that are not fulfilled, but generally brought to Nothing, when he attempts them? How many *Pleasures* does he pursue, that end in Nothing but the *Bitterness* of *Disappointment*; and often, in, what is much worse, the *Bitterness* of a wounded *Conscience*, which He always carries about with him, and from which he cannot fly. Providence has not yet so forsaken the present Condition of *Virtue* and *Goodness*, in this World, as to leave *Wickedness* wholly triumphant; or to give it the Encouragement of the *good Things* of this Life, without the common Mixture of the *Bad*. Far otherwise. We see, the *Wicked* Man often suffers, in this World: Nor can all his Cunning and Contrivance, in *some* Cases, keep off from him the public Disgrace of Evils much above the ordinary

dinary and common Evils, of which He also has his Share, here below.

S E R M.  
XVII.

It may indeed, be sufficient, to ask, upon this Head, Of all the Men ordained to live in this world, Who is there ; Who has there ever been ; Who can there ever be, truly *Self-sufficient* ? Who, so fitted for *Happiness* within himself, as to place no Part of it in any thing *without* him ; or, to seek for no Part of it any where but *within* his own Breast ? Who, so perfect, or, Who framed after so peculiar a Manner, as not to find it unavoidable to delight in, or love, some particular *Good*, so as to make the Uncertainty, or Loss, of it, a great *Evil* ? *One* indeed, fixes upon *one* Thing ; and *Another*, upon *Another* : *One*, upon the *Riches* of this World ; *Another*, upon the *Honours* and *Pride* of it ; *Another*, upon *Reputation* and *Glory* ; *Another*, upon his *Family*, and his *Children* ; *Another*, upon the *Pleasures* of *Friendship*, or *Learning* : But still every *One*, upon something, or other. All find it so necessary, to seek Support, under the expected Evils of this Life, from some one, or other, of these, or the like, *good Things*, that They constantly, and universally, do it. And though the Best of them do Nothing but what Nature leads Them to ; and though They make the wisest Choice possible, in fixing

SERM. fixing upon something the most proper of  
 XVII. all Things *below*, for their Assistance; and  
 though They pursue it with *Innocence*, and a  
 due Regard to *Religion*; yet even still it must  
 be owned That there is Room enough left for  
 very *severe* and piercing *Afflictions*. There is  
 one single Circumstance of human Life, which  
 is alone sufficient to render insipid every Thing  
 that can be called Enjoyment. I mean, the  
*Habitual Want of Health*, which Many, we  
 see, labour under. And much more are the  
 frequent Returns of the most *violent Pains* and  
*Diseases*, which are the *Portion of Others*,  
 able of Themselves, to scatter *Misery*, where  
*Joy* might otherwise reign; and to bring to  
 Nought the Happiness of Those who possess  
 the greatest of all *temporal Goods*.

Nor do I see a *Remedy* in this Case. For  
 we must take our *Natures*, as God has made  
 them; and the *World*, as we find it. We can-  
 not pretend, by any *Self-Sufficiency*, to pro-  
 cure for Our-selves, that little Happiness  
 which We, for a few Hours or Days, some-  
 times obtain in this State; and which we  
 cannot help desiring, any more than we can  
 help desiring *to live*. And yet it is true,  
 That, whatever it is, here below, that our  
 peculiar Constitution of Mind directs us to  
 pursue, in Aid of our Happiness, must have

so much of the *Nature* of the other *Good* SERM.  
*Things* of this State, that it cannot but be, XVII.  
 one Time or other, the Occasion of Uneasiness  
 and Affliction. But I come now to the next  
 Point I propos'd, which was

II. To shew, after what Manner it is the Duty of reasonable Creatures, and *Christians*, to bear those *Afflictions*, which are so unavoidable in this State.

And here, I think, we are to consider the different and various Tempers, Educations, and Dispositions, of Mankind; by which it must come to pass that They cannot possibly All shew themselves equally couragious, or equally patient, in the same Circumstances.

It is nothing to *one* Person to lose a Summ of *Mony*, who yet is sunk by the Loss of an exalted *Station* in Life. It is a small Matter to *another* to suffer in this Point of *Honour*, who cannot bear the least Disappointment in *Profit*, or *Gain*. And a third Person, perhaps, values a *Friend*, or a *Relation*, more than the most covetous Man upon Earth does his Bags; or the most Ambitious, his *high* Estate. And, again, the Passions of Some may be stronger by Nature than those of Others; and their personal Weakness greater: They may be of a softer and more tender Nature,  
 and

SERM. and so capable of deeper Impressions, and  
 XVII. more disorderly Commotions of Mind, than  
 ~~~~~ their Neighbours: and the Notions They  
 have received in their Education, may have
 still more distinguished Them from Other
 Men. Allowances are to be made for all
 these Things: and Almighty God will cer-
 tainly make all reasonable Allowances for
 such Variety of Circumstances, and Dispo-
 sitions.

It cannot be expected, that One who is
 possessed with the Love of Money, or Ho-
 nour, can bear a *Separation* from *Them*, with
 as little Shew of Remorse, as One who never
 felt any strong Inclination towards them. And
 so likewise, in other Cases. But, taking all
 these Considerations into the Account, the least
 that can be our Duty, under the severest Dis-
 pensations of God's Providence towards us, in
 the Removal, or Diminution, of those good
 Things, from which we have expected any
 Addition to our Happiness in this World, is,
 To acknowledge God to be perfectly wise, and
 perfectly good; much better able to judge
 and to determine what is good for Us, than
 we are, for ourselves; and to submit to Him,
 as to a Governour, to whom there is all the
 Reason in the World to commit Ourselves,
 and all our Fortunes.


I do not think, and therefore, I cannot SER M. teach, That this *Submission* to Almighty God, XVII. which is equally the *Duty* of *All*, must be joined with a *rejoicing* in such *severe Dispensations*. On the contrary, It seems to me to be perfectly consistent with a deep and sorrowful Sense of the Loss we have sustained, and of the Good removed from us. Otherwise indeed, it can hardly bear the *Name* of an *Affliction*.

I know, In the Case of *Persecution* for the Sake of the Gospel, our blessed Lord speaks, of *rejoicing*, and *being exceeding glad*; and his Apostles, of *counting it all Joy to suffer for his Sake*. But these are to be looked upon as *Figurative Descriptions* of a State of Mind, reasonable, indeed, in itself; but not commanded, as the strict *Duty* of every *Christian*.

It is, in itself, I say, reasonable, if we consider only the Goodness of the Cause, and the greater Rewards of another Life, which our *Sufferings* procure us, even to express a *Joy*, in the midst of All the Pains We can undergo, for the Sake of our Religion. Nor can it be denied That there have been Instances of Men, who have, in this Best of *Causes*, shewn all the Marks of a *real Joy* in their *Sufferings* for it. I wish, the like could not be said of *Others*,

SER M. *Others, in the very Worst, and most unwor-*
 XVII. *thy of such an Appearance. But, on the other*

Side, considering the Nature and Circumstances of Man, in this World, it seems impossible for *All* to arrive at such a Perfection, as to be able *literally* to fulfil such Expressions. And therefore, This cannot be the *Duty* of *All*. I am sure, the Apostle, in the Text, expressly saith, that *no Chastening is, for the present, joyous, but grievous*; and this, with regard to our *Suffering* for the Sake of the *Gospel*. Nay, our *Lord* himself not only advises his first *Disciples*, in some of his last Hours, to *watch and pray, that They may not enter into such Temptations, or severe Trials*, on account of their Relation to *Him*; but recommends to Them in *other* Passages, the Prudence of avoiding Them, as far as They innocently and honourably could. And if We call to mind *his own Practice*, when His *Sufferings* pressed close upon Him, for the most glorious Cause, which He knew to be his *Father's Will*, and *his own Undertaking*; We shall see that He did not think it unworthy of his Character to shew the sincere Tokens of *exceeding Sorrow*, mixed with his *Submission* and *Perseverance*. So that, even in this extraordinary Case of *Persecution* for *His Sake*, it may be justly said, That an honest *Christian* performs

performs that *Duty* which GOD requires of S E R M.
 Him, when He *patiently* submits to Pain and XVII.
 Torment, as the *Act* of *Providence*, rather 
 than *deny* his Master, or *abjure* his *Religion*.

And upon all the foregoing Considerations, with regard to the *usual* Calamities attending human Life, I shall not scruple to say, That what the Great and Good *Ruler* of all Things expects from his imperfect Creatures, as a *Duty*, is, Not that they should wish for, or desire, *Calamities*; or shew a *Stupidity*, or *Joy*, under them: but that They should have Recourse to the Considerations of Religion; and make a rational and patient Submission to Him, as to a wise and good Governour, in all the *Afflictions* which They may experience in the Course of this World. And now, in order to this,

III. I shall point out the strong Reasons there are, to induce them to bear these *Afflictions* with Patience, and a proper Submission to Almighty God.

No one can deny that it is both just and reasonable that God should sometimes try the Duty and Affections of his Creatures, provided such Trials contain Nothing in them beyond their own Strength, or That which he is pleased to afford them. Nor can any


SERM. one deny it to be highly reasonable that Men,
 XVII. in such a State as this, should give some plain
 Evidence that they believe there is a God, a
 Being of perfect Goodness, and perfect Wisdom, who governs and disposes all Things here below. Now, What greater Evidence of This, is it possible for Us to give, than patiently to submit all our Affairs to his Determination, and quietly to acquiesce in his Decrees? This doth not at all forbid Us to make use of our own Prudence, in guarding, as much as we can, our Lives here below from all the *Evils* of this *State*: but teaches Us to do this under the Inspection of his Eye, and with a constant Submission of *our* Wills to *His*. And the serious Consideration of our own weak and imperfect Faculties, and of His infinite Perfections, will soon convince Us, that such a *Submission* is, in our present Condition, our greatest Happiness.

If We consider ourselves, and the *Powers* that belong to us; We shall find how narrow and confined they are. How many material Things are there, that we must be ignorant of, even of great Concern to ourselves, and our Happiness here below? By how many Passions, and how many Fancies, are We often led out of the Paths of Right Judgment
 I about

about our own true *Good*? And this, to such a Degree, That other Men, weak and frail like Ourselves, can often see our real Interest, better than we can, merely because They are not Ourselves, or biased by any foolish Self-love, when they judge in our Case? Experience itself has frequently taught Us, how mistaken we have been in our past Determinations; and how little able to judge what would be the Consequence, were all our own Desires fulfilled: And therefore, how miserably unfit to allott to Ourselves our own Portion of *Good* and *Evil* in this World. If these Things be so; can there be a greater Happiness than to be under the Governance of a Benevolent and all-wise Guide, who cannot be mistaken in our real Good; and who, in all his Dispensations towards us, is Himself directed by a constant regard to our true and lasting Interest?

In the poor Condition of human Life here below, What a Blessing is it, to Children, and Persons not come to the Maturity of their Judgment, to be under the Conduct and Management of wiser Persons than themselves; more experienced in the Affairs of this World; and better Judges of what is fit for them, and what not? How often might They ruine

A a themselves,

SERM. themselves, under the Notion of Good and
 xvii. Pleasure, if they were not so? How of-
 ten would their Appetites, or their childish
 Conceits, be the Instruments of their Unhap-
 piness? And what are the best and wisest of
 Us, when compared with Almighty God,
 but weak as Children, and as truly unfit to
 choose for ourselves, in many Cases of singular
 Importance to Our chief Concern? And if it be
 an Happiness to *Them* to be under the Guidance
 of Others, whose Duty it is to keep them from
 noxious and hurtful Things, and to grant
 them Nothing but what is truly good for
 them; how much more is it happy for *Us*,
 that there is One above us, to train and educate
 us to a more blessed State, by the Discipline
 of Afflictions when he sees them necessary:
 and thus to consult our true Interest by de-
 nyng us the Enjoyment of what is not so good
 for us as we imagine; and by not permitting
 us to ruine ourselves; as, probably, we should
 do, were our Desires, in this World, more
 frequently granted us.

It is a Work of Difficulty, I confess, con-
 tentedly to part with That, on which we have
 founded any of our Hopes of Happiness
 in this State. But see how easy, even for
 worldly Reasons, and without any of
 the

the Assistances of Religion, many Men can be, under great and considerable Disappointments; and see also how Time has performed those Cures upon the most disturbed Minds, which They have not permitted Reason and Consideration to do: And then judge, Whether it be not much more becoming Us, to have this Cure effected by wise and excellent Motives, or, in other Words, by the most reasonable and most unexceptionable Methods. And what can be of more proper Influence upon any ingenuous and well-disposed Mind, than the Consideration of God's Providence; the Thought that it is agreeable to his Will we should suffer all we suffer; that the Circumstances we are in, are what He has judged proper, for the best and wisest Reasons, to allot us: Or, at least, that our Portion is so far his Determination, that, if He had seen it to be bad for us, all Things considered, He would not so much as have permitted it to be what it is? And this is much the same Satisfaction, as if He himself had assured us that it is what we ourselves should choose, did we know our own good, and could we see all Things as they truly are.

And this leads to another Consideration very well fitted to make us easy and resigned; That, let our Condition be what it will, at



SERM. present, it is such as We ourselves should choose,
 XVII. or patiently submit to, as the fittest and best,
 if all Things, proper to be considered, could
 be present to our View. For the Reason
 why We do not, at first Thought, acquiesce
 in all the Dispensations of God Almighty, is
 because We do not see that Fitness and Pro-
 priety in them, which He always has before
 his Eyes. And this proceeds from the
 Imperfection of our Capacities and Un-
 derstandings: which Defect can be supplied
 by Nothing but our Submission to a superior
 and perfect Understanding.

It may be an innocent Speculation to think
 how great our Happiness would be, if we
 were so framed, as to see perfectly every
 Particular, and all possible Circumstances, re-
 lating to our Condition here, and hereafter;
 what is truly our *Good*, and what is not:
 But this is not given to Us. We may seek
 after such Knowledge, as well as we can;
 but we must be content with that Cloud of
 Darkness in which it is at present wrapped
 up; and give Repose to our *Souls* in the
 reasonable Assurance that there is a Being su-
 perior to us, who made us, and who governs
 us; that this Being sees all Things as they
 truly are, in their own Natures and Tenden-
 cies; and orders Nothing for his Creatures,
 but

but what they may be satisfied is best and fittest to be ordered. And did we but heartily believe this, and duly consider it, it could not but be a mighty Relief to us in all our Exigencies: And we could not but feel the satisfaction of a rational Faith supplying the Defects and Imperfections of our own Natures.

SERM.

XVII.



But, in order to this Relief, We must strictly guard against that great, and, I had almost said, blasphemous Error, which represents God, as acting, in the Government of the World, and in the Disposition of the Fortunes of his Creatures, after an arbitrary and tyrannical manner, in order to shew his Power and Greatness: and always think of Him, as a *Being* who delights in Nothing more than in doing Good; and esteems Nothing so much his Glory, as to act constantly, and without Interruption, according to the eternal Rules of Justice and Goodness. And if we would often thus represent to Ourselves Almighty God, as the Best and Wisest of All Beings, who could have no End in creating us, and can have none since in governing us, separated from our own Happiness; This would be a solid Ground of inward Satisfaction and Contentment, amidst all the Unhappinesses and Pains, and Distresses, of

SERM. this World: especially, if we added to the
 xvii. Argument, That this same God has assured Us
 of *Another* future and unchangeable State, in
 which He will reward the Patience and Re-
 signation we have exercised in *This*; and
 make us ample Amends for all the tempo-
 ral *Evils* we have here sustained. This is
 what leads Me, as I proposed,

IV. To speak of the great Advantages of
Afflictions to those who *are exercised therein*;
 and who bear them with a due Christian
 Patience, and Submission.

To pass through an uncertain miserable
 World well, has the greatest Encouragement,
 when it is known to be the Road to a certain
 and happy State; a State, in which we shall
 receive infinitely more Good than ever we
 have lost here; if we press towards it with a
 manly and Christian Greatness of Mind. And
 this Encouragement We cannot be without,
 if We truly believe That there are *Treasures* in
Heaven, sufficient to make the Want of all the
 Gold of *this* World tolerable; Honours and Glo-
 ries, sufficient to make the Disgraces of this
 State fit easy; and Happiness in such Per-
 fection, as to make all the *Miseries* experi-
 enced here below, appear of little Moment,
 when compared with what is to come.

How

How then should this Thought contribute SERM. to the enduring any temporal Evils and Calamities with a decent Patience, That, in the XVII. other State, if we make ourselves worthy of the Rewards of it, All will be exactly what we could wish; the Loss, or Want, of the good Things of this World made up to us a thousand Fold, by large Communications of unmixed Happiness; *Sickness*, and *Pain*, exchanged for *Health*, and *Vigour*, of Body and Mind; Infirmities of every Sort, far removed from Us: and this happy Condition made more happy by the Certainty and Stability of It; free from the uneasy Suspicion of any future Alteration, or any the least Decay in the Favour of GOD towards Us.

And, Is it not worth while to be Patient under the transient Evils of this World, which you must suffer whether you will, or no; and which are made much more intolerable for want of a reasonable Submission? Nay, to shew a proper Degree of Contentment under them, when this will certainly procure you a higher Place in the Love of God, and a greater Portion of the Rewards of Heaven, than you could hope for without them? It is indeed, for this Purpose, that God layeth his afflicting Hand upon Some; not to crush or oppress them,

SERM. into a stupid, unactive, and desponding Con-
 XVII. dition; but to give them an Opportunity of
 ~~~~~ demonstrating their Faith in *Him*, and of prac-  
 tising those Precepts of *Religion* they have  
 treasured up in their Minds.

And that this does not proceed from any  
 Want of Love, and paternal Benevolence, to-  
 wards Them, the *Final Issue* of these *Corrections*,  
 when *Patience shall have had its perfect Work*,  
 will openly prove: when the great *Ends*, pro-  
 posed by Him, will appear to have been, That  
 He might more effectually take their Thoughts  
 off from this wretched World; and fix them more  
 firmly upon another and better State, to which  
 They are hastening apace: That They might  
 do the more Service to true Religion, by their  
 Examples, *here*; and deserve more of his Fa-  
 vour, and receive a brighter Crown of Glory,  
*hereafter*: That He might make their Virtue  
 and their Faith *to shine* more bright *before*  
*Men*, in *this* State; and Themselves more *il-*  
*lustrious* Instances of his Love, before his  
 Angels, in Heaven. And we may add to  
 what I have said, That thus it has pleased the  
 same GOD to deal with Some of the greatest  
 Examples of *Virtue*, (always amiable in  
 his Eyes,) which have appeared in the  
*Heathen, Jewish, and Christian, World*: and

even with his own Son, in whom He declared SERM.  
Himself well pleased. XVII.

The mention of this *Divine Person*, who, when in our Form, was a *Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*; and who is both our Master, and our great Original to copy after, leads Me to think, I can conclude with Nothing better, than this short Exhortation. Let every one of us, with respect to the *Evil Things* of this Life, have His Example always in Our View. This will teach Us that, before any Affliction is actually come upon Us, We may becomingly say, with Him, *Father, remove this Cup from me*; but it will teach Us also to add, in *his* Words, *Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou willest*. And after the Time is come when we see it to be *God's Will* that we must suffer Affliction, in some Point or other; let us learn, from the same perfect Pattern, to endure it after such a Manner, as that, being made like unto *Him*, in Suffering, and in Patience, in *this World*, We may be made *like unto him* also, in the Glories of That which is *to come*.



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*The* CHRISTIAN RACE.

S E R M O N XVIII.

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I CORINTHIANS ix. 24, 25.

*Know ye not, that they which run in a Race, run all, but one receiveth the Prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every Man that striveth for the Mastery is temperate in all Things. Now They do it to obtain a corruptible Crown, but We an incorruptible.*

**T**H E S E Words are an *Allusion* to S E R M. those public Races, which were XVIII. much in Use amongst the *Heathens*, in St. Paul's Days, and drew together a great Concourse of People from all Parts. And as it was His Custom to draw Arguments for Care, and Diligence, and Patience, in *Christians*, from what passed in the World about Him; so we find Him frequently referring to all the Other *Sports*, and *Contests*, then in Use: such as *Fighting*, *Wrestling*, and

S E R M. and the like. Thus, speaking of the *Christian Con-*  
 XVIII. *test* He says, *We wrestle not*, Or, as it is in  
 the *Original*, *Our wrestling is not*, against  
*Flesh and Blood*, but against *Principalities and*  
*Powers*, &c. Eph. vi. 12. And, immediate-  
 ly after the *Text*, speaking of Himself, He  
 says, *So fight I*, not as *One that beateth the*  
*Air*; Or, more literally, *as One who is not*  
*beating the Air*, in a feigned Fight, merely to  
 exercise his *Arms and Hands*: But, like One  
 in earnest, *I keep under*, or rather, *beat my Bo-*  
*dy*, and bring it into *Subjection* as an *Adver-*  
*sary*: which He expresses by Words taken  
 from the *Bruises and Marks* of those severe  
*Blows* given to *Adversaries* in the public  
*Fightings* of his Days; and the *Insults* over  
 Them when conquered. And, in the tri-  
 umphant Review of his own Conduct, He  
 particularly makes use of the Expressions  
 peculiar to these Games, and Contests,  
 2 Tim. iv. 7. *I have fought a good Fight*;  
*I have finished my Race*: *A Crown of Glory,*  
*is laid up for me*. So also, in other Places of  
 his Writings.

In the Words of the *Text*, He entirely  
 confines his *View* to the public Races, then  
 much frequented: And They may be thus in-  
 terpreted. "You know that They who pretend  
 to *run* in the *Stadium*, or Place in which the  
 public

public Races are performed, *All* indeed *run* SERM.  
 for the *Prize* proposed; but that *One* only XVIII.  
 obtains it; *He*, that outdoes the rest, in *Acti-*  
*vity*, and *Swiftnes*s. And the like may be said of  
 the *Christian Race*. They who profess *Christi-*  
*anity*, or pretend to be aiming at the Re-  
 wards promised to *Christians*, *All* pretend like-  
 wise to *run* the *Christian Course*, or lead the  
*Life of Christians*. But it is *one* Sort only of  
*These*, who obtain the *Prize* proposed; only  
*They*, who come up to the *Conditions* required  
 by their great *Master* and *Judge*. *So run that*  
*ye may obtain*; that is, Since there is but *one*  
 Sort of *Professed Christians*, who can obtain the  
*Crown of Life*, contended for, it ought to be  
 your *Endeavour* *so to run* the *Christian Race*,  
 that you may be of that *Number*. But  
 in order to this, You must consider That  
*Every one who striveth*, in these *Races* amongst  
 the *Heathens*, undergoes a great deal of *Pains*,  
 and exercises the severest *Instances* of *Com-*  
*mand* over his *Appetites*, in order to the pre-  
 paring his *Body*, and going through the *Fa-*  
*tigue* of his *Undertaking*. *Now They do all*  
*this to obtain a Garland* of *fading Leaves*, and  
 the *Acclamations* of *Men* perishing like them-  
 selves: How much more should *We Christians*  
 willingly undergo the like *Care* and *La-*  
*bour*, who expect a far greater *Reward*; an  
*incorruptible Crown* of never-fading *Glory*,  
 and

SERM. and eternal Honour, in the Presence of  
XVIII. God?"

Thus we see what the *Apostle* aims at, in this *Allusion* to the Preparation, Care, and Labour, of Those who strove in the Sports and Games of the Heathen. And from these Words, thus interpreted, I propose,

I. To consider the Nature of the Christian *Race*, represented to us in this *Allusion*; and what is necessary in order to Success in it: under which will appear the main Intention of the *Apostle* in this Passage. And,

II. To take occasion from hence to enlarge the *Apostle's* Argument, by adding an *Instance* or Two, of that Care, and Labour, and Pains, which the Men of the *World*, by their own Choice, undergo, for the obtaining as great a Portion as They can, of the good Things *below*; in order to stir up an Emulation and Zeal, in *Christians*, who profess to seek after nobler Enjoyments *above*, to equal, if not excell, Them, in all the like Care, and Labour, and Patience.

I. We are led to consider the *Nature* of the *Christian Race*, represented to us in this *Allusion*, and what is requisite to our Success in it:  
not



not excluding what St. *Paul* often alludes to, SERM. and argues, relating to the *Other* public Games XVIII. and *Contests* for Glory, amongst the Men of his *Age*.

Let us see, then, what was thought requisite, at that Time, towards finishing those *Races*, to which the Apostle alludes, so successfully, as to obtain the Garland, or *corruptible Crown*, He here speaks of; and consider whether this will not lead us into some proper Thoughts about the Nature of the *Christian Life*; and what is requisite towards the obtaining the *End* proposed by all who are really *Christians*. Now,

i. In order to the striving and contending successfully, in these *Races*, or other Exercises, it was thought absolutely necessary for the *Contenders* to undergo a severe *Preparation*, by which they were made fit for the Fatigues of their *Contests*. And this is one Thing principally aimed at, by the *Apostle* in the *Text*, when He says, *Every one that striveth for the Mastery*, or that pretends to run, and contend, for the Prize, *is temperate in all Things*; performs every Instance of *Self-denial*, and Command of all his Appetites, necessary to fit him for the successful finishing of his main Undertaking. And from hence the  
*Apostle*

SERM. XVIII. *Apostle* takes occasion to argue, *Much more* should *You Christians* go through the *Discipline* of a due *Preparation*; as the *Prize* *You* contend for, is infinitely more excellent: and then goes on, in the Words following the *Text*, to let the *Corinthians* know that He himself found great *Necessity* of *subduing his Body*, lest his *Bodily Appetites* should hinder Him in that extraordinary *Course*, which He, as an *Apostle*, had to *run*. And, certainly, whatever any *Christians* may find necessary, in order to the having a perfect *Command* over those *Bodily Passions*, and *Appetites*, which are the great *Enemies* They have to strive against, ought to be strictly performed, if They would *run* their *Christian Race* with Success.


But This was not the only *Preparation* They were to undergo, who of old contended for *Victory* in the public *Races* and *Games*. There was another *Preparation* also necessary, without which they could not hope successfully to finish their *Course*: A *Preparation*, by which they were instructed in the *Nature* of their *Courses*; the *Rules* of their own *Conduct*; the *Stratagems* of their *Antagonists*; and animated with a *Desire* of the *Glory* of *Conquerors*. And as, without such a *Preparation*, it was in vain for *Them* to enter upon their  
 their

their Work: so, likewise, it is invain for SERM.  
*Christians* to enter the Lists against the Ene- XVIII.  
 mies of their Souls; and to undertake so labo-  
 rious a Task as the *Christian Life*, which is  
 furrounded by *Adversaries* on every Hand,  
 and admits no Rest 'till They are come to the  
 End of their *Race*; it is invain, I say, for  
 Men to undertake this, without the like *Pre-*  
*paration*, of considering and knowing, what  
 is necessary for their great Undertaking.

For instance, They must be inwardly con-  
 vinced that *Jesus Christ* was sent by GOD, and  
 reveled eternal Rewards and Punishments to  
 Mankind: or else, They will be greatly in dan-  
 ger from every Temptation that allures them;  
 and too apt to yield to the inviting Scenes of  
 Pleasure, Profit, or Honour, always ready to  
 be presented to their View. They must be  
 forewarned of all the *Dangers* in their  
 Way; all the *Wiles* and *Stratagems* of their  
*Enemies*, so often spoken of in *Scripture*, the  
*World*, the *Flesh*, and the *Devil*: otherwise,  
 They may be apt to be *surprized* by the *Im-*  
*ages of Good*, which may be unexpectedly placed  
 in their View, to turn them aside from their  
*Course*. They must also be perfectly instructed  
 in the *Conditions* required of them; and in all  
 those *Rules*, that are necessary for the running  
 their *Christian Race* aright: otherwise, They

SERM. may mistake fatally, in Matters essential to XVIII. their Success; and embrace *Evil for Good*, and *Wrong for Right*; and find themselves, at last, going backward rather than advancing forward. A *Preparation* of themselves in these and the like Particulars, by consulting and considering the *Gospel* itself, and not the *Phantasies* of Men, is what all *Christians* must undergo, before they can hope to finish their Course with Glory. But

2. In the performing of the *Races* of Old, to which St. *Paul* here alludes, there was a Course of Labour, and Care, and Diligence, continued without the least Interruption of Idleness, or impertinent Trifling. And This leads us to consider the *Christian Race* likewise, as a Business of constant Care, and Diligence, never to be interrupted, if we desire to arrive successfully to the End of it. And indeed, To imagine that *Christianity* can ever dispense with the greatest Degree of serious *Attention* and Care, is to contradict the *Design* of it, and to undervalue the *Rewards* it proposes. For the *Christian* is never quite secure on this Side Heaven; because He is never in a State free from dangerous Enemies. He is nearly joined to His own deceitful and flattering Appetites, which are, upon all Occasions, endeavouring to seduce Him; He lives in a World which,  
every

every Hour, furnishes him with new Scenes S E R M.  
of *Trial*; and with *Objects* framed to terrify XVIII.  
Him from *Virtue*, and to allure him to *Vice*.   
And has such a Person any Reason to think  
of remitting his *Diligence*, or loosening the  
Reins of *Government* over himself; when one  
fatal Mistake, or Slip, through an inadvertent  
Negligence only, may involve him in Cir-  
cumstances, from which He may never be  
able to extricate himself? Let the *Christian*  
only remember That it is the *Habit* of *Virtue*  
which is the very *Race* He is obliged to run ;  
and then consider that this *Habit* is the con-  
tinual repeated *Præctice* of every particular  
*Duty*, as often as Occasion offers ; and he can  
have no doubt That the most constant and  
serious Care is requisite towards the keeping  
and preserving such an *Habit*, as well as to-  
wards the obtaining it.

The Importance, therefore, of the Matter ;  
and the Dangers that encompass a *Christian*,  
through every Portion of his *Time*, make his  
*Race* also, like Those of Old, a continued  
Course of watchful *Labour* and *Care* : But not  
of *Labour*, and *Care*, without even pre-  
sent *Pleasure* and *Satisfaction* mixed with  
it. For it is not possible for us to con-  
ceive a greater inward Pleasure, than what

SERM. the good *Christian* enjoys, in the Testimony  
 XVIII. his own Conscience gives to the Uprightness  
 and Reasonableness of his Conduct; or a  
 truer *Satisfaction* than He finds in the Thoughts  
 of the Favour of his great Judge, and in the  
 Prospect of the Rewards of Heaven.

3. In order to the right Performance of  
 those *Races*, antiently so much in use, there  
 was a Necessity of *laying aside every Weight*,  
 or *Burthen*, in order to make the *Body* as  
 active, and light, and unmolested, as possi-  
 ble. So, likewise, in order to the successful  
 running of the *Christian Race*, every *Burthen*,  
 or *Impediment*, which may make us the  
 less fit for our Course, is to be laid aside,  
 and thrown from us.

Thus St *Paul*, in the *twelfth* Chapter of  
 his *Epistle* to the *Hebrews*, alluding to  
 the same *Games*, says, *Let us lay aside every*  
*Weight*, in order to *run with Patience the Race*  
*that is set before us*: And this very properly,  
 because the more free Men are from *Weights*,  
 the more likely to perform their *Race* suc-  
 cessfully. What the *Apostle* particularly meant  
 by *every Weight*, He explains by adding im-  
 mediately, *and the Sin which does so easily be-*  
*set Us*: or rather, *every Weight*, even *Sin*  
 which is always close to Us; and is certainly,  
 the heaviest *Weight*, and strongest *Impediment*,

to a *Christian* in his *Race*; And a *Weight* SERM.  
 therefore, which He must of necessity lay XVIII.  
*aside*, if He has one Thought, in earnest, of  
*running*, so as to obtain the *Prize*.

4. Our Lord himself, in speaking of the *Christian Life*, and what is necessary in order to it, goes still farther; and often mentions the removing out of the Way, every thing which may *offend*, or, which may be the Occasion of our *Stumbling* in our *Christian Course*; and so, of *losing the Prize*, by falling before We come to the End. And this, let it be of what Nature it will; never so necessary to our Comfort and Happiness in *this World*; never so dear, or useful to us; never so painful in the Removal of it; though it be our *right Hand*, or our *right Eye*, if we cannot keep it without *sinning*, We are to *cut it off*, or *pull it out*, and *cast it from Us*. Otherwise, we cannot overcome in the Christian Contest.

How ridiculous a Thing would it have been for any Person, in the *Races* of Old, to have pretended so much as to enter upon his *Course*, without having first removed from himself all that might *hinder* him in it? And how much more unaccountable is it, in any *Christian*, to think of arriving, with Glory, at the End of his *Race*, or of being victorious in his spiritual

SERM. Contests, whilst he is resolved against parting  
 XVIII. with any thing grateful at present to his  
 Senses; though never so prejudicial to his  
 Virtue, and of never so fatal Consequence to  
 his *Pretensions*.

And yet, *This* is what we see every Day amongst professed *Christians*, That Men can hope and expect to be saved by *Jesus Christ*; and seem to aim at that *incorruptible Crown* which He has promised; and yet are most unwilling to part with Those beloved *Vices*, which They themselves know to be inconsistent with all *Hope* of it: as if They were determined to arrive at *Heaven*, in their own Way, or not at all; and thought to take it by Storm, without thinking once in earnest, of the *Conditions* required of them. But *These* are *Christians* who little deserve that Name; nor seem at all to live under the Influence of such an *Institution*; who have undertaken the *Race* of *Christians*, and yet are disposed to multiply upon Themselves, more and more of those *Hindrances* which They find agreeable at present, rather than to part with *Every*, or *Any*, *Weight* that is likely to *press* Them down; or to remove out of their Way, *Every*, or *Any*, *Stumbling-block*, that may hinder the *Success* of their Course. Again,



5, It was thought necessary for the successful Performance of those *Races* and *Contests* of Old, that They who *ran* and *strove* in them should be inflamed and animated with the Prospect of *Victory*, and the Glory consequent upon it; that They should ever have the *Crown* of Leaves (*fading* as it was) before their Eyes, and the Shouts and Acclamations of the *Spectators*, (*vain* as They were) in their Ears. And from hence We *Christians* may be taught, That, in order to our successful running the *Race* that is set before us in the *Gospel*, and contending for another Kind of *Victory*, it is highly necessary that We should always have in our Thoughts the just Expectation of that *incorruptible Crown* of *Glory* hereafter, which is to be the Reward of our *Victory* here. This our blessed *Lord* himself judged worthy of his own Character. To whom *St. Paul* therefore, directs our View, in the *Passage* just now cited, *looking unto Jesus, who, for the Joy that was set before him, endured the Cross, despising the Shame.* This all the *Apostles* of our *Lord* thought highly requisite, in the extraordinary Course They had undertaken to run, and the *Fight* They had to fight; to consider the *Rewards* They were at last to inherit; and that all their *Conflicts*, in

ERM. this World, were *not worthy to be compared*  
 XVIII. *with the Glory that shall be reveled.* And  
 They owned that This it was which kept  
 Them firm and faithful to their great Master,  
 in the difficult Office he had called them to.  
 It may well, therefore, become *Us*, who  
 stand in need of all Supports, and all moving  
 Considerations, to enlarge our Prospect beyond  
*this* Scene of Things, and to take into our  
 View the *Glories* of the *Other*, which is to open  
 after this is broken to pieces; and thence to  
 draw *Arguments* for resisting all the Tempta-  
 tions here below, which are but for a Mo-  
 ment; and for pressing forward, without any  
 Intermision, towards *the Mark of the Prize of*  
*our high calling.* When We consider this  
 incomprehensible Reward; according to our  
*Faith*, so will our *Endeavours*, and our *Con-*  
*duct* be, in our *Christian Race*: And, if we  
 truly believe that there is a *Crown* reserved  
 for Those who bear up against all Opposition,  
 in a constant Course of Righteousness, We  
 shall think no Enemies here below insupera-  
 ble.

There is another Consideration peculiar  
 to the *Christian Contest*, and not belonging to  
 those Others which we have been speaking  
 of; and it is *this*, That, as the *Christian* who  
*runs his Course* with all Care, and Diligence,  
 and

and good Conduct, is secure of a glorious SERM.  
*Reward* : so, the *Christian* who, through his XVIII.  
 own wilful Carelessness, and Neglect, fails  
 and sinks in his Christian Course, not only  
 loses that *Reward* which the Other obtains,  
 but inherits unspeakable Punishment, propor-  
 tionable to the *wicked Folly* of One, who pro-  
 fesses to have the most glorious *Reward* in his  
 Eye, and yet of his own Choice neglects to ob-  
 tain it; and is shamefully contented to fall  
 short of it. This is a Consideration which  
 must work upon the meaner Souls, as the other  
 attracts the more ingenuous and best disposed  
 Minds.

6. I shall mention one *Instance* more of  
 what was thought requisite to the glorious  
 Performance of the *Contests* and *Races*, to  
 which the *Apostle* in the Text alludes; and  
 that is, a *Perseverance* to the End.

Many may be apt to think, that it was a  
 glorious Thing to begin, and to proceed hap-  
 pily a good Way, after the best Manner :  
 and so it was, considered as it tended to a happy  
 Conclusion. But if the *Contenders* of Old  
 stooped or failed, in the Middle, or even within  
 view of the *Bound* to which they were to come ;  
*All* was nothing, and They failed likewise, of  
 their *Glory*, and of their *Crown*. And so it is  
 in the Christian Life. It is a happy Thing to  
 begin

SER M. *begin* well ; and happier still to make a considerable Progress in the Paths of the *Gospel*.

But if the *Christian* does not *persevere* steddily to the *End* ; if, when he comes within View of the *Crown of Glory* in the other World, he relapses into the Life of *Infidels*, and *Sinners*, He stains all his former *Lustre* with a base and ignominious Dye ; He forfeits all his Title to the Heaven and Happiness of *Christians* ; Nay, he renders himself much more inexcusable, than if he had never moved one Step in the Paths of *Righteousness* ; by suffering Himself to be conquered by those very Enemies which he had before found he could subdue ; and by falling voluntarily from a State of the most desirable Freedom, into an inglorious *Slavery* to *Sin* ; and thus bringing Contempt and Shame upon the Religion of *Christ* itself.

Thus have I considered the *Parallel* between the public *Contests* and *Races*, so much celebrated and frequented in *St. Paul's* Time ; and the *Christian Race* : and from hence have endeavoured to shew the Nature of the *Latter* ; and what is necessary for the happy Success of it. I must just observe, as We pass, That the whole Intention of the *Apostle* may be plainly expressed thus, agreeably to what has been said. “ If these Men, of whom

I speak, can come, by Patience and Self-de-SERM. nial, to conquer their *Bodies*, and their strongest XVIII. *Appetites*; and enstate themselves in a perfect Command over themselves; and endure so much, and persevere so long, for the Sake of a *contemptible Prize*, a Garland of fading Leaves; Much more ought *You* to be willing to *labour*, and *strive*, and *exercise* the greatest Government over Yourselfes, who aim at a much nobler Prize, an *incorruptible Crown* of eternal Glory." I come now,

II. To take occasion from hence to enlarge the *Apostle's* Argument, by adding an *Instance* or Two, of that sollicitous Care, and incessant Labour, with which Men pursue after the Things of this Life; in order to shame Our-selves (if we have any Shame left,) into a greater Concern for the Rewards of another never-ending State.

1. Look on the Man that follows the Alarms of War, and see what He can undergo, for the distant View of future *uncertain* Honours, or Riches: to what Dangers He willingly exposes his Life; in what Fears, and Cares, and perpetual Tumult, his Breast is exercised; his *Mind* continually upon the Rack, ever projecting Evil to his Enemies, and guarding Himself against All their *Designs*; and filled with

SERM. with all the Uneasiness of various Passions ;  
 XVIII. and his *Body* worn out by all the Extremities  
 of Heat and Cold, and more Hardships than  
 we can number. What would Men say,  
 were all this required of Them, in order to  
 obtain the Kingdom of Heaven? And how  
 hard a Task-master would they represent Al-  
 mighty God to be? And yet *all this* Men often  
 voluntarily choose, for what brings along  
 with it Nothing of lasting Good and Hap-  
 piness ; and chearfully undergo it, for the Sake  
 of those worldly Advantages, which they  
 often do not obtain ; and which, if obtained,  
 are never truly satisfactory, and, at best, but  
 of a very short Continuance. For *such* Re-  
 wards, *Men* are often seen to bear what  
 one would think intolerable to human  
 Nature : and yet *These* are but the Sha-  
 dows of *Good*, which often betray Men into  
 Excess and Misery, and can never afford a  
 constant and lasting Satisfaction. On the con-  
 trary ; the Rewards of Heaven, though of an  
 infinite Duration, carry very weak Charms  
 along with them ; and few think it worth their  
 while to *labour*, and *contend*, for them. If  
 they will fall to their Lot, without the Pain of  
 seeking after them ; well and good : They are  
 contented to be made happy, if it may be with-  
 out

out any Expence of their own: But they have little Zeal or Heart to take much Pains for it. So absurdly do many professed *Christians* behave themselves, and so unequally, with respect to the *corruptible* Crown below, and the *incorruptible* Crown above. And,

2. Once more, Behold the Man that follows the Arts of Gain and Advantage, after a more sedate and less tumultuous Manner: The Man, I mean, that has proposed to himself, as his chief End, the *Treasures* of this World, by the more peaceful Methods.

What Care and Labour, in *his* more silent way, will he refuse to undergo, for the Sake of the wretched *End* He has in view; though He is uncertain of obtaining it, at least before he comes to be almost incapable of enjoying it? He will rise up early, and late take Rest, and eat the Bread of Carefulness, and run all Hazards, and watch all Opportunities, and catch at every handle, and use all Tricks, and think no Pains ill employed, that He may possess himself of what he can never be sure of keeping; and of what, he knows, he must certainly, in a very short Time, leave behind him.

And shall not the Thought of this kindle an Emulation in the Breasts of Those who seek after other *Treasures*, and other *Riches*;  
*Treasures*

S E R M. *Treasures* that cannot deceive those whose  
 XVIII. Hearts are truly set upon them; and *Riches* from  
 which Nothing can ever separate the Man who  
 is once possessed of them. They are perfectly  
 satisfactory to a reasonable Creature; they  
 are of eternal Duration; out of the Reach of  
 all Accidents; guarded by Almighty Power;  
 and dispensed by infinite *Goodness*. And is not  
 the Motive of such *Riches* able to inspire us  
 with another Sort of *Covetousness* than is seen  
 here below? a *Covetousness*, not *the Root of all*  
*Evil*, but *the Principle of all Good*; not a  
 fordid Desire of what cannot profit, but a  
 glorious Thirst after true and everlasting Hap-  
 piness? How can we hope to answer for our  
 Want of Zeal and Industry, in this Pursuit, at  
 the last Day, when our own Zeal and Care,  
 about the Concerns of this Life, shall *perhaps*  
 witness against us; and the *Labours* and *Toils*  
 of Others, the *Children of this World*, shall  
*certainly* serve to confound and abash us, for  
 our Inactivity and Negligence in a much nobler  
 and more glorious Cause.

This *Argument* is so reasonable that I  
 shall leave it to your own Determination: and  
 return to the *Comparison* used in the *Text*; and  
 so conclude.

We have a *Race* of Labour and Care, to *run*;  
 that is, a *Life* of strict Virtue to *live*. We have



a *Prize* in view, to contend for, ineffimable, and worthy of all our Pains and Industry; *that is, eternal Glory and Happiness.* We have a *Day* set, in which we must finish this Course; the present Life; and, after this short *Day*, the *Night of Death* cometh, in which *no Man can run.* We have a *Judge*, infinitely knowing and righteous, to determine our *Condition* according to our *Endeavours* in this *Race*, viz. the great GOD, who is not to be imposed upon, and cannot be biassed: and, *after Judgment* given, there is an *Eternal State* for us to live in, either of *Reward* or *Punishment.* And these are not *light Matters*; but such as deserve many of our *Thoughts*, and much of our *Time.* Let us behave ourselves like Men under the Influence of such momentous *Truths*; and then, We shall *forun* our *Christian Race*, that we shall obtain that *incorruptible Crown*, which is the *Prize* we are contending for.



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*The Best* CHRISTIANS, *unprofitable*  
SERVANTS.

S E R M O N   X I X .

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LUKE xvii. ver. 10.

*So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are Unprofitable Servants, We have done that which was our Duty to do.*

**T**HERE are two *Extremes* Men have S E R M .  
run into, in the Matter of *Good* X I X .  
*Works*, and in their rating the *Ser-*  
*vice* They pay, and the *Duty* They perform,  
to Almighty GOD. On the *one* Side, Some  
have put such a Value upon the *Good Works*  
of *Christians*, as to make them *meritorious* of  
that *Salvation*, which is promised in the *Gos-*  
*pel*. And, on the *other* side, Some, who have  
thought this *impious*, and *injurious* to the *Mer-*  
*cy* of GOD, and the *Merits* of *Jesus Christ*,  
have departed as far from it as they could;

SERM. and have brought down the Price of *Good Works* so low, and made them to bear so inconsiderable a Part, in the great Affair of *Salvation*, as almost inevitably to lead incautious Men of bad Inclinations to think them hardly worth the *Care*, or to deserve any of the Regard, of a *Christian*. The *Church of Rome* teaches the *Merit of Good Works*, in our Claim to the Rewards of *Christians*: And Others, in opposition to *That*, teach us, in effect, that *Good Works* signify so little to our Justification, that we are not so much as to bring Them into the *Account*; nay, That We must cast them from Us, when we would plead our Title to *Heaven*.

The Truth apparently lies betwixt these *Two*, and may be thus expressed; That, though our good Actions do, by no means, deserve the *exceeding Happiness* promised in the *Gospel*; and come greatly short of such a *Reward*, as is set before Us in *That*: yet, They are not so inconsiderable, or of so little account, but that our Title to the *Heaven* of the *Gospel*, cannot be pleaded without them; nor our Station in it be assigned Us, without the Consideration of them. The *Merits of Christ*, indeed, *that is*, His Obedience, and Life and Death here below, are said to purchase this *Reward* for us; and, if He had not humbled himself

himself for our Benefit, our *Good Works* S E R M.  
 could have given us no Expectation of such X I X.  
 Rewards, as He proposes. He *suffered*, that   
 We might be exceedingly happy, upon the  
*Terms* of his *Covenant* with Mankind; and  
 that *Covenant* is, That We should abound in  
*Good Works*, Or, in all the Instances of Vir-  
 tue and Righteousness. Nay, whatever it be,  
 that *He* has merited for *Us*; it is all suffi-  
 ciently declared to be of no Importance to  
 Us, but on Condition that we shew forth in  
 our Lives such *Good Works* as He has com-  
 manded. And therefore, though We are  
 said to arrive at *Heaven* for the Sake of *Him*,  
 who came to restore Us to the Favor of  
 GOD; yet, we must arrive at it, through such  
 a *Life* of *Good Works*, as He himself has made  
 indispensably necessary to the obtaining of it;  
 and no otherwise, as far as He has reveled  
 his *Father's Will* to Us.

Which of the *Two Errors* I have men-  
 tioned, is of the worst Account before GOD,  
 may be judged of, by considering which of  
 them leads to the most pernicious *Consequences*.

It is a foolish and groundless Boast, to say  
 that all the best Works, of Any Man,  
 collected together, can possibly *merit*, at  
 the Hands of GOD, those eternal *Rewards*  
 promised to *Christians*, which bear too great  
 a Proportion to the poor Services of our

SERM. whole Lives, to be comprehended by us. But  
 XIX. then it is worse than *foolish* and *groundless*, to  
 make so little Account of those *Good Works*  
 which the *Gospel* insists upon, in every Page,  
 as tends to render Men careless and un-  
 concerned whether they perform any, or no.  
*All* that We can do is not worthy indeed, to  
 be compared with the *Glory that shall be re-  
 veled*: But, the very End of Christ's Ap-  
 pearance being to *teach* Men to *deny Ungodli-  
 ness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righ-  
 teously, and godly, in this World,* and expressly  
 so declared, To speak meanly of those *Good  
 Works*, which are in such manner command-  
 ed, seems to oppose the declared Purpose of  
 the Son of God's appearing in the Flesh;  
 and may unhappily lead Men into a State,  
 first of *Carelessness*, and then, of *Sin*. For, as  
 the Doctrine is sometimes explained, the Ob-  
 ligation to *Virtue* is almost imperceptible to  
 common Capacities; and requires superior  
 Faculties, and some Subtleties, to find it  
 out: And if it does not directly encourage  
 many to neglect what is declared to be  
 of the utmost Importance, by the plain  
 Words of the *Gospel*; yet, at best, it never can  
 be thought to excite Men to the *Good Works*  
 required in it,

Both

Both these *Errors* are carefully to be avoided: and, in order to our avoiding them, the Consideration of the *Words* I have now read to you will, I think, be of some Service, *So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants, we have done that which was our Duty to do.* They are an Instruction given by our *Lord* to his Followers, immediately after a *Parable* he had spoken to them, about a common *Servant* amongst Men, who, though he did all that his *Lord* commanded him, and performed his *Duty* faithfully, yet could claim no *extraordinary* Favour from him; nor any thing more, than to be treated as a *Servant* still. Our *Lord* then adds, *So likewise ye, who are my Disciples, when you have done your Duty to God; and performed the Service He has commanded; You cannot claim that Happiness, as a Reward in Justice due to your Services, which God will in Mercy give you; but ought to acknowledge yourselves Unprofitable Servants.* You have, indeed, performed your *Lord's* *Commands*; and *done what it was your Duty to do*, even for your own sakes considered as *Servants*: And from This you may reap the Satisfaction of thinking, That you cannot have incurred the Displeasure of your *Master*, or deserved any *Punishment*; nay,

SERM. That You have a strict Right to whatever  
 XIX. *Wages* You contracted for, or whatever Ad-  
 vantages inseparably belong to your *Offices*:  
 But You cannot claim, from hence, any *ex-*  
*traordinary* Favours, as due to such Servants;  
 and cannot justly pretend to have merited that  
 exceeding Glory which I am come to set be-  
 fore You.

If we apply these *Words* to all *Christians*, to  
 whom They belong much more than to the  
*Apostles* of *Christ*, whose whole Lives were  
 spent in the greatest Instances of Service and  
 Obedience; We may draw some useful  
 Lessons from *Them*. At present, I pro-  
 pose,

I. To observe, from them, That there is a  
*Service* and Obedience indispensably due from  
 all *Christians* to Almighty God; or, That  
 they are so obliged to do all that He has com-  
 manded in the *Gospel*; that they cannot hope  
 for Heaven and Happiness without it.

II. To observe that, when we have sincere-  
 ly practised all the Laws of Virtue and Right-  
 eousness, given to Us by God, We ought to  
 acknowledge that we are *unprofitable Servants*;  
 and that we cannot claim the *Rewards* of the  
*Gospel*, as due to us upon the Account of those  
 Services,



Services, but must own ourselves unworthy SERM.  
of them. This will naturally lead Us, XIX.



III. To consider, on what Account, the *Best of Christians* may be justly styled *Unprofitable Servants*; and to have little Reason to over-value their best Services.

I. That there is a *Service and Obedience* indispensably due from all *Christians* to Almighty God; or, that all *Christians*, according to their Abilities and Opportunities, are so strictly obliged to do all that is commanded them in the *Gospel*, that They can have no Ground for any Expectation of the Rewards of *Heaven*, without it. This is plainly signified in the *first Part* of the Words read to You, *so likewise Ye, when ye shall have done all those Things which are commanded you*; in which there is strongly implied an indispensable Obligation to the Performance of all the Commands of the *Gospel*, in order to our future Happiness promised in it.

The Meaning of this, is not, That there are no *Hopes of Salvation* to a Man, if He shall ever fail in any Point of Evangelical Obedience; or that GOD will be so rigorous as never to forgive any Neglects, or Transgressions, of the most sincere, and honest, of his Servants: But that there is such an Obligation

SERM. upon *Christians*, That, if they willfully and  
 XIX. habitually neglect the Duties of the *Gospel*,  
 and allow themselves in any known Sin; that,  
 if they do, even under Pretense of magnifying  
 the Mercy of God, *continue in Sin*; nay,  
 That, if they do not, in a regular and settled  
 Course, *follow after Righteousness*; They can-  
 not hope to secure themselves an Interest in  
 the Favour of God, or the Rewards of ano-  
 ther Life.


They are all the Creatures of an Almighty  
 Creator, and the highest Obligation to *do his*  
*Will* results from that *first*, and close Relation.  
 They are all the Subjects of a most powerful  
 and merciful *King*; and therefore, obliged to  
 obey, both out of *Love*, and out of a just *Fear*.  
 They are all tied to his Interest by the most  
 endearing Instances of Mercy and Kindness;  
 and therefore, are bound in *Gratitude* to re-  
 turn him all the Duty He can expect from  
 them. They owe all They have, and all  
 They can hope for, to Him, and his Favor;  
 and therefore, They cannot pay him back too  
 much Regard and Obedience. They are all  
 to be considered, as under *his* Authority, and  
*He*, as their great *Lord* and *Master*: and from  
 hence results all possible Service to such a  
 Master. By these, and many more, *Ties* are  
 They most strictly obliged to love, honour, and  
 serve

serve, Almighty God; whether He had called SERM. upon them in an extraordinary Manner to do XIX. it, or not. But He has thought fit to *Speak*  *unto them by his Son.* And by this *his beloved*  *Son*, and his *Apostles*, it has been declared, constantly, in a multitude of the strongest Expressions often repeated, That without our Practice of all Virtue, and Obedience to all his holy Commandments, here *below*, We shall never arrive at the Place of *Reward*, and *Glory*, *above*. This is, indeed, so plainly the uniform Voice of the *New Testament*, that it alone may justly be thought a sufficient proof that the *Unprofitableness* of our *Services*, affirmed in the Text, cannot be intended to sink the Value of *Moral Good Works*, so as to make them appear of little Importance in the Affair of Christian Salvation. This therefore, being certain, in the Dispensation of the *Gospel*, That a *sincere* Obedience to all God's *Commands*, is absolutely necessary to our *Salvation*; I shall now proceed to what I next proposed from the Words of the Text, *viz.*

II. That the *Best Christians*, when They *have done all that is commanded them*, or, their whole Duty, in the Service of God; and have sincerely practised all Virtue and Righteousness;

SERM. nefs; ought, after this happy Conduct, to  
 XIX. confess Themselves to be *Unprofitable Servants*;  
 and to acknowledge that They cannot claim  
 such *Rewards*, as the *Gospel* proposes, as of  
*Right* due to their utmost Endeavours. So ye,  
 when ye have done all that is commanded you,  
 say, *We are unprofitable Servants.*

In which Words We must not imagine that our Lord declares, or insinuates, that the best *Christians*, and such as have exercised themselves in all the *Good Works* of his *Holy Religion*, ought to acknowledge Themselves to have done Nothing in what is called the Service of GOD, or for the Good of Mankind; or of any Significancy to their own Salvation; or That any thing like this is the *Meaning* of the Words *unprofitable Servants*. Far be such Thoughts from Us, concerning *Him*, who, in this very *Parable*, represents Himself, or his *Father*, as speaking to Every Christian of this Sort, *Well done, good and faithful Servant; enter into the Joy of thy Lord.* And from this Passage it may justly be inferred, That a Man may be a *good and faithful Servant*, in the Sense of the *Gospel*; and yet be an *unprofitable One*, as the Word is intended in the *Text*. For the *Name, unprofitable Servant*, here used, is so far from being opposed to *One* who has faithfully performed all  
 due

due Obedience and Service to his Master, that S E R M. it is actually given to Those who are supposed XIX. to have *done all those Things which are com-  
manded them.* 

Nor can the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the *Text*, be the same with the *Unprofitable Servant*, *Matth. xxv. 30.* For the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the *Text*, is expressly described as *One* who has served *GOD* sincerely, and actually *done what it was his Duty to do*: and the *Unprofitable Servant*, in the other Place, is as expressly declared to have, knowingly and willfully, neglected his Duty; and called, by his *Lord*, a *wicked and slothful Servant*; and by his Appointment, ordered to be *cast into outer Darkness, where there is weeping, and gnashing of Teeth.* But the Meaning of the *Words* of the *Text* must be, that, as *that Servant*, of whom Our *Lord* had been speaking, in a *Parable* before, though he had been serving his *Lord* well in the *Field*, either *plowing, or feeding his Cattle*, could not at his Return home, claim, as his Right, any extraordinary Favor from his *Master*; could not, for instance, demand, or expect, to be invited by his *Master* to *sit down to Supper* before He himself had supped, as it is expressed in the *Parable*; or to be treated otherwise than as a *Servant* who had  
done

SERM. done what it was his Business *to do*: So, the  
 XIX. best *Christians*, Those who have served God  
 ~~~~~ most faithfully, in all the Duties of their several Stations, cannot claim, as their just Due, the extraordinary and unconceivable Joys and Happiness of Heaven; but must acknowledge that They are *unprofitable Servants*; and that the *Duty* They have performed bears no Proportion to Those incomprehensible Rewards They are to enjoy. I come now, as I proposed,

III. To consider on what Accounts the *Best of Christians* may be justly said to be *Unprofitable Servants*; And to have little Reason to overvalue their *Services*.

I. They may be said to be *Unprofitable Servants*, because they cannot, with all their Services and all their Labours, make any the least Addition to the well-being, or Happiness, of Almighty God, their great *Master*. And, in *this*, the *Servants of God*, and the *Servants of Men*, differ; that the *Servants of Men* can, by their Diligence and their honest *Service*, contribute greatly to the Increase of their *Masters* Riches or Honour; and, in some Instances, very much promote their Happiness in this World. But the *Servants of God* can only, by their Service, do *Themselves* good, and
 increase


increase their own true Happiness. AND SERM. XIX.
 the Reason is, That the richest and most powerful of Mankind are frail and imperfect Beings; liable to many unfortunate Accidents; standing in need of many Supports; and owing much of their Greatness to the meaner Sort who are under them: But Almighty God, being most perfect in himself, and enjoying all possible Happiness, is therefore, utterly incapable of the least Addition or Increase of Glory, or Pleasure. What therefore, can our *Services* demand of *Him*, to whom they add not one Grain of *Greatness*, or *Happiness*?

Every *Master* amongst Men would account *him* but an *unprofitable Servant*, who, with all his Pains and Care, could not possibly do any thing for his Advantage, or for his Satisfaction; and hardly think himself obliged to reward him, in an extraordinary Manner, for a *Service*, out of which He could reap no real Benefit. And that *Servant* himself would hardly have the Face to expect or demand the least *Favour* from his Lord, on that Account. Thus it is with Us, considered as *Servants* to the great God. We are truly *unprofitable Servants*, to *Him*; utterly incapable of doing any thing that can increase or improve his Happy Estate.

SERM. It is true indeed, That, as we are his
 XIX. *Creatures*, brought into Being by his Almighty
 ~~~~~ Decree; and willing and desirous to fulfil his  
 Will; We may claim the Protection of his  
*Providence*, and his paternal Regard to Us,  
 as long as He continues us in being; and  
 cannot but enjoy the *Reward* of an inward Sa-  
 tisfaction of Mind arising from this Considera-  
 tion. And again, the great God, whose  
*Creatures* We are, may condescend, as He  
 does in the *Christian Revelation* of his Will to  
 the World, to call our best *Endeavours* by the  
 Name of *Services* to Himself; and speak of  
 them as promoting his *Glory*, and increasing  
 his *Honour*; and by promising Us more than  
 We can deserve, may oblige himself to *Per-  
 formance* so, as to give Us a *Right* afterwards  
 to expect and demand it, if We have not fail-  
 ed on our own Part. But, since it is most  
 evident That we cannot, by all our *Services*,  
 add the least Increase to infinite *Perfection*; it  
 cannot but become Us to own, and say, *We  
 are unprofitable Servants*; We have, indeed,  
 endeavoured *to do what it was our Duty to do*,  
 which is a Comfort to Ourselves, but we have  
 contributed Nothing to our great *Master*.  
 But

2. *The Best of Christians* may be said to be  
*Unprofitable Servants*, if we consider the many  
 Failings,



Failings, and Faults, they are liable to, in that S E R M. *Service* which They really intend to perform; XIX. and the Mixture of many *Imperfections* in their very best Actions. 

The sincerest *Christians* in the World, though They do what God will, at the last day, accept, for the Sake of *Christ*; yet, They cannot be said, in the Strictness of Justice, always to do whatsoever They can, in what They call God's *Service*. They have their Intervals of Coldness and Indifference, or of Carelessness, when it may be said that *the Spirit is willing, but the Flesh is weak*. And they have, in Every State of Life, strong *Temptations*, to strive against; which they do not always entirely overcome. They sometimes yield; or, if they do not, yet they often overcloud the *Victory* with the Attendance of some *Imperfection*, or other: and frequently experience in Themselves, what They cannot excuse even to the Judge within their own Breasts. And if so imperfect *Servants*, who are sometimes diverted from their Duty; and cannot command Themselves, upon every Occasion, to attend to their Duty: If such *Servants* as these should claim the unspeakable *Rewards* of *Christians*, as due, in *Justice*, to their imperfect and interrupted Endeavours,

I ours,

S E R M. yours, They would justly incur the Imputati-  
 XIX. on of *Arrogance*.

And besides that the *Best* of Men are guilty of *Failings*, and *Negligences*, in the several Branches of their Duty, They do also, sometimes, mix so much of human Imprudence, and of the *Imperfections* of their Nature, with their best Actions, that They spoil the good they intend, and frustrate the very End they propose to Themselves, by their own Weakness and Inadvertency: so that, if one were to examine into the *Events* of such Matters, it is a *Question*, concerning some very well-designing *Christians*, whether their *Zeal* and *Devotion*, intended for God's Service, has more conduced to the promoting the great Ends of *Religion*, and the *Glory* of God, in the World, than their *Imperfections* and *Imprudences*, (the Characters of which they have stamped upon their best Undertakings) have contributed to the *Prejudices* of other Men, and the *Hurt* of Religion itself. And, though we have to do with a merciful God, who will not rigorously punish these Mixtures of *Imprudence* which are to be found in the Conduct of good Men; yet, when He grants the exceeding Rewards of Heaven, and the unexpressible Glories of a *future* State to such *Servants*; this must be accounted

accounted a *Favor*, and not a *Debt*; promised to Them by the unmerited Goodness of a merciful God; and given to Them, as *Due* on Account of that Promise, and not for any thing done by Them previously to it. Certainly, were They themselves, who are encompassed with such Imperfections, and give daily proofs of such Imprudences, made Judges in their own Case, and set to determine what Name They themselves deserve; whether the Name of *Meritorious*, or of *Unprofitable*, Servants; They would, with all Humility, acknowledge that the *Latter* Title was their due; and That, though They had, in the main, truly intended the *Service* and Honour of God, in the Course of their Actions, yet They had not always prosecuted their Design, or done their Duty, after such a Manner as to deserve any better Word, or Character.

3. The *Best Christians* may, in no very improper Sense, be called *Unprofitable Servants*, considered in Themselves, and their own *Merits*; and justly be said to have little Reason to boast of any thing They can do; because They have received their whole *Capacity*, even of doing any Duty at all, from that *Master* himself, whom They *serve*.

If We carry our Thoughts back, and consider our *Creation* only, We may truly say

D d

that

SERM.

XIX.

SERM. that *Almighty God* endowed us, at our first  
 XIX. coming into Being, with all the Powers and  
 ~~~~~ Faculties we have; and gave us even the  
Possibility of serving Him: and if we have
 any Strength, by our original Frame, to do
 any good Actions, This very Power is the
 Gift of our *Creator* and *Master*. And, if
 We go farther, in our Thoughts, as *Christi-*
ans, We shall find That *God*, after having
 given Us these Capacities of Good, did not
 stop here, but, in Mercy to Us, sent his *Son*
 into the World, to make us fresh Offers of his
 Favor, and to promulgate the strongest Motives
 and Arguments for the Performance of our
Duty, which is his own *Service*; and that, in
 order to this, his *Holy Spirit* is represented, in
 the *Gospel*, as procured by *Christ*; and given
 to the *Prayers* of those *Christians*, who duly
 and heartily ask it.

If therefore, *God* communicated to us, at
 first, all the Powers and Faculties of Moral
 Agency, which We enjoy; and if the same
 God affords us all the Assistance in our Ser-
 vice to Him, which is proper and necessary
 for Us; with what *Right* can We set such an
 immoderate Value upon our Services to
Him, as cannot possibly be justified, unless
 We could evidently demonstrate that our
Good Works are altogether *Our own*, in this
 Sense,



Sense, that *We Ourselves* were the Original Framers of All the *Capacities* We are endowed with; and the Givers of all the *Powers* We find in our *Constitution*; which is the highest *Absurdity*: and that *GOD* our great *Creator*, and *Christ* our mercifull *Redeemer*, have no part in Them; which is the greatest *Impiety*.

We find *St. Paul*, who, in that *Foolishness* of *Boasting* which He excuses from the *Provocation* of his *Enemies*, declares that *He had laboured* more abundantly than *All the Other Apostles*, ending his triumphant *Speeces* with *Acknowledgments* of what was due to the *Assistance* of *GOD*; and laying the *Glory* of his *Labors* at the *Feet* of his *great Master*. And, in *Imitation* of such an *Example*, the *Best* of *Christians*, who have been the most exemplary in all *Virtue* and *Goodness*, and the most abounding in all *the Fruits of the Spirit*, have been always found the most ready to refer the *Glory* and *Praise* of their well-spent *Life* to that *Lord*, who taught and led them; and to attribute the *Success* of their *Labors* to a kind *Providence*, and to a *Conduëtor superior* to Themselves. Considering therefore, under whose *Discipline*, and *Direction*, *Christians* act, in the *Service* of their *Master*; and to whom They owe the very *Capacity*

SERM. and *Power* of acting at all, in that *Service*,
 XIX. They have too just Reason to speak of Them-
 selves as *Unprofitable Servants*; and as utterly
 void of any *Claim* to *extraordinary Favors*
 from God, for having performed that *Duty*,
 which He himself gave them the *Power* of
 performing.

I have now done what I proposed from
 the *Words* of the Text; and have shewn, I
 hope, That there is an indispenfable Obliga-
 tion upon all *Christians* to perform all that is
 commanded them in the *Gospel*; and that,
 when They have done all that is commanded
 them, They ought to confess and say, *We*
are Unprofitable Servants: And lastly, That
 on *several* Accounts They may truly be said
 to be *Unprofitable Servants*.

I will now add an *Observation* or *Two*,
 not foreign to what I have been saying; and
 so conclude.

1. The Subject We have been treating,
 may naturally lead Us to a *Question* which has
 been sometimes asked by Those, who, I fear,
 are much more willing to know what is *not*
 their strict Duty, than to practise what they
know to be so: And that is, Whether any
Christian can do more than He is command-
 ed, or, than it is his *strict Duty*, to do?

To

To this, I think, it may be answered, SERM.
 That no Christian can possibly do more, in XIX.
 the great Points of Moral *Duty*, rightly un-
 derstood, which are the *Good Works* required
 in the *Gospel*, than He is strictly obliged to
 do; because *These Points* are always indis-
 pensably necessary, and the Obligation to
 Duties never released or abated: But that, in
 other Points, and these not displeasing to
 GOD, which may be said to belong to his
 Religious *Service*, as Circumstances of it, a
Christian may do more than what is strictly
 enjoined, as absolutely necessary to his Salva-
 tion.

This may be the better understood from
 what St. *Paul* says of *Himself*; viz. That He
 chose to preach the *Gospel* to the *Corinthians*
 without any *Charge* to Them, in order to
 have a greater Influence, in the Exercise of his
Office, amongst Them; and that this was *more*
 than He was strictly obliged to do. For it
 is plain that He (as well as all others) was
 obliged to do whatever He apprehended to
 be most for the Honour of God, and the In-
 terest of his Gospel: And yet it is also as plain,
 from his own Words, That, had He taken a
 Maintenance of Them, He could have justi-
 fied Himself before God; and had ground
 for *boasting*, that He did not. He expressly

SERM. distinguishes between his strict Obligation to
 XIX. preach the *Gospel*; and the *Circumstance* of
 ~~~~~ preaching it without Charge to 'Them.---“ *Wo  
 to Me, if I preach not the Gospel. This is my  
 indispensable Duty. But whether I shall  
 take a Maintenance for doing this, or not;  
 This is left free to Me: and I have chosen not  
 to do it: This is the Ground of my Boasting.*”  
 I Cor. ix. 6, 19.

I might mention also what is written of  
 the first Believers, that Those amongst them,  
 who had Possessions, sold them, and laid the  
 Price at the Feet of the *Apostles*, to be distri-  
 buted, in common, to All who wanted. It  
 is evident, of These Persons, that They  
 were strictly obliged to the *Duty* of Charity  
 to their *Brethren* in want: and yet, it is also  
 plain that This particular *Behaviour* of Those  
 who voluntarily and honestly performed this  
*Service*, in so extraordinary a Manner, was  
*more* than was *commanded* Them by their  
 great *Master*. Nay, it is declared, by St.  
*Peter*, *Acts* v. 4. that it was not their *strict*  
*Duty*, but a Matter left to their own  
 Choice. From whence it appears, that, in  
*this*, They did *more* than it was their strict  
*Duty* to do.

2. From what has been said may appear  
 the absurd *Vanity*, to say no worse, of the  
*Romish Doctrine* of the *Merits* of the Best  
 Works



Works of any *Christians*. Nay, the *Words* S E R M.  
 themselves of the *Text*, without any *Comment*, XIX.  
 are sufficient to shew it. For, in *them* We  
 are supposed to have actually done all that is  
*commanded Us*, and, in another Expression,  
 All that *it is our Duty to do*; which is the  
 most favorable Supposition possible concern-  
 ing the *Best* of Men: and, after all this, with  
 such a *Treasure* of Good Works accompany-  
 ing Us, We are taught and directed to say to  
 our Judge, with our own Mouths, “*We are*  
*unprofitable Servants.*” And how our utmost  
*Services*, imperfect and *unprofitable* as They are,  
 can merit the immense Happiness offered Us,  
 in the *Gospel*, it is impossible for the *Wit* of  
 Man to prove.

3. From what has been said, We may far-  
 ther learn, not only the *Vanity*, but the  
*Wickedness*, of another *worse* Doctrine of the  
 same *Church*, which, (for fear, one would  
 think, that Men should not be careless  
 enough in the great Affair of their own Salva-  
 tion,) encourages Them in all Negligence, by  
 pretending to *transfer* the *Superfluous Merits*  
 of *Saints* (so called) to the Account of the  
 greatest *Sinners*; that is, to give, or per-  
 haps sell, the *Kingdom* of *Heaven* itself to the  
*Worst* of Men, void of all *Good Works* of  
*their own*, for the Benefit of procuring  
 Them a Quantity of such *Good Works*

SERM. as can be spared from the Stock of *Others*,  
 XIX. according to this *Invention*.

W You will, I hope, recollect, That the *Instances* I mentioned, from Scripture, of Good Men who have done more than their strict Duty, related to the *Circumstances* only of some Religious Duties; and not at all to what was *essential* to the *Duties* themselves; or to any Branches of *Christian Morality*: and observe from thence, That no Man, amongst the most Perfect, was ever thought to have too many of such *Good Works*; or, for Instance, was ever said to be more *Charitable*, more *Temperate*, more *Pure*, more *Peaceable*, or more *Humble*, than the Dictates of Reason, and the *Commands* of GOD, rightly understood, made it his *Duty* to be. No Works of *Supererogation*, therefore, are to be found in *these*, or any of the *Moral Virtues*. And these being the only *Good Works*, of any Account, at the Great Day; No *Christian*, who is destitute of them, *Himself*, can possibly be supplied by Others; because, of *these* truly and necessary *Good Works*, the *Best* Man in the World, has *none* to spare; but rather justly fears he has not enough for *Himself*, and for the Security of his own eternal Interest. And as to any Mistakes of *Ignorance*, or *Enthusiasm*; such as the *Romantic Excesses* of Some, in the  
*Rigors*

Rigors of *Abstinence*, or the *Severities* of SERM.  
*Penances*, and the like; They may, by a XIX.  
 good GOD, be *pardoned* to well-meaning  
 Men; but can never be acceptable or pleasing  
 to Him. Consequently, such as these, though,  
 in truth, *Works of Supererogation*, yet can-  
 not be thought, by any Man in his Senses, to  
 be the *Good Works* of the *Gospel*. They may  
 indeed be granted, or sold, to Those upon  
 whom the Managers of such Merchandise  
 can impose. But it is impossible They  
 should do any real Service to Those deluded  
 Men who depend upon Them, because They  
 are not the *Good Works* required of *Christians*,  
 as necessary to Salvation.

4. Lastly, if, from what has been said, We  
 are truly convinced of the *Necessity* of *Good  
 Works*, as the indispensable *Condition* of our fu-  
 ture Happiness; though not of their *Merit*, as  
 the adequate Foundation of our Claim to it;  
 Let this induce us not to be so incensed against  
 the *Doctrine* of the *Merit* of *Good Works*, as  
 to avoid Them, for fear of being tainted by  
 it; and not to dwell so much upon the *Me-  
 rits* of *Christ*, as to forget the *Conditions*  
 which he absolutely requires at our Hands.  
 For it may, I think, justly, be said, That  
 we had much better believe the *Merit* of  
*Good Works*, than have None at all to produce  
 for

SERMON for Ourselves at the last Day: And that it  
 XIX. will be found a more pardonable Error, at that  
 ~~~~~ Time, not to have considered so much as We  
 ought, the *Merits* of *Christ*, than to have
 neglected that *Obedience* to all his Commands,
 which He so strictly requires of us, in his
Gospel.


May We all be sensible, both of what we
 owe to GOD, and to his Son *Jesus Christ*: and
 also of the great *Work* We ourselves have to do;
 that so We may do it, and be blessed in our
 Deed!

The Nature of CHRIST'S Blessing.

S E R M O N XX.

A C T S iii. ver. 26.

God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless You, in turning every one of you from his Iniquities.

THE Doctrin plainly delivered by St. S E R M.:
Peter, in these Words, is this, That the XX.
Blessing, with which *Jesus Christ* was 
sent by his *Father* to bless the World, consists
in *turning Men from their Iniquities*. This I
design to make the Subject of my following
Discourse. And, in order to give all the
Light and Evidence I am able to this great
and important Truth, I shall consider it un-
der these following *Propositions*; which will,
I hope, form a strong *Argument* in Support of
it.

I. That

SERM. I. That the promised *Messiah* was to be the
 XX. greatest Instance possible of the *Love* of GOD to
 the World; and the Design of his coming, to
 bless Mankind with the most perfect Blessing
 which GOD could bestow on Man, or Man
 receive from GOD.

II. That the greatest *Blessing* Men are capable of, consists, either, in never transgressing the *Laws* of *Virtue*; or, if they have unhappily transgressed, in their being *turned from their Iniquities*, to the Practice of all *Virtue* again.


III. That therefore, if *Jesus* be the *Messiah*, as we believe Him to be, upon the strongest Grounds; the great Design of his coming must be, to *turn* the World from *their Iniquities*; to restore *Reason* and *Religion* to their rightful Authority over Mankind; and to make all *Virtue*, and true *Goodness*, flourish in the Earth.

I. That the promised *Messiah* was to be the greatest Instance of the *Love* of GOD to the World; and the Design of his coming, to bless Mankind with the most perfect Blessing, which GOD could bestow on *Man*, or *Man* receive from GOD.

This is so universally acknowledged by all, S E R M.
who either believe that the *Messiah* is already .XX.
come, or have any Expectation of the Ap-
pearance of such a Person; that it may justly
be taken for granted, without any Injury to
the present Argument.

The Descriptions of this great *Person*, from
the Beginning of the World to the Appearance
of Our *Blessed Lord*, were so framed, as
first, to raise, and then, to strengthen, this
Notion in the Minds of Men. The Marks
and Characters, by which He is described
through the Books of the *Old Testament*; the
Names, and Titles, and Attributes, bestowed
upon Him by the Mouths of the antient Pro-
phets; the *Accounts* given, in the same *sacred*
Writings, of that *grand Revolution* which was
to attend upon his Appearance in the World:
All these conspire to lead *Them* who receive those
Books, to look on the promised *Messiah*, as
the most consummate Blessing GOD could be-
stow, or *Man* receive: and this, whether
They believe *Jesus* to be that *Messiah*, or
not.

Accordingly, the *Unbelieving Jews* them-
selves constantly maintained, and never could
forsake, this certain and undoubted *Principle*,
though they drew a false and fatal *Conclusion*
from

S E R M. from it; and so argued themselves into *Infidelity* and *Ruine*. This they were sure of, that;  whatever it was, in which the chief Happiness of Man consisted, *That* they might, and ought to, expect from their *Messiah*. But then, the great Evil was, that the whole Body of That which alone They esteemed their *Religion*, was of so low and earthly a Nature; their *Notions* of higher Matters so totally corrupted; and their *Minds* and *Morals* so universally debauched; That, at the Time when our blessed *Lord* lived, They did not, or would not, know any *greater* Happiness than what arises from *Riches*, *Honours*; *Pomp*, and *Luxury*; *Revenge* upon their temporal *Enemies*, and *Triumphs* over the *Adversaries* of their worldly Greatness. And the *Consequence* was this, That, since our blessed *Lord* appeared in a low and mean Condition, and was so far from flattering their *Pride*, or *Revenge*, or *Sensuality*, that all he did, and said, manifestly opposed and condemned their most beloved *Notions*; *They* resolved to reject him, and shut their *Eyes* against all the Evidence he brought along with Him. One of the *Principles* They went upon, could not be denied, *viz.* That the Design of God, in sending the *Messiah* to his chosen People, was to bless *Them* with the greatest Blessing They were

were capable of; which was the first Thing SERM.
I propos'd. But the *Other* is most certainly XX.
false, *viz.* That the *chief Happiness* of Man
consists in the Gratification of his *Appetites*,
his *Pride*, or his *Revenge*: As will, I hope, be
very evident from the *second Proposition* I laid
down, which was This,

II. That the greatest *Blessing* of which *Men*
are capable, consists, either, in never trans-
gressing the *Laws of Virtue*; or, if they have
unhappily transgressed Them, in their being
turned from their Iniquities, to the Practice of
Virtue again.

For the making ourselves sensible of this,
We are to consider,


1. That *Man*, as a reasonable Creature,
has a *Principle* in him, interwoven with his
very Nature, which is plainly designed to di-
rect and advise his Practice *before* Action;
and to judge Him *after* it; which calls him
back, when he is going astray; and reproves
and reproaches Him when He has acted un-
reasonably. And this is what we call *Rea-
son*; or, which is the same Thing, *Consci-
ence*.

2. The next Step is, That the proper
Happiness of such a *Being* as *Man* must con-
sist in acting agreeably to this *Reason*, or *Con-
science*. This follows from the *Former*. For
if

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SERM. if the *Author* of his Nature has made him so,
 XX. that He finds within his own Breast a constant
 Monitor and Director, pointing out to Him his
Duty; then certainly, this *Duty* must be his *Happi-
 ness*; and the acting contrary to it, his *Misery*.
 The same *Reason* which tells him the *first*, has
Power enough to make him very sensible of
 the *Last*. For, as it is a Guide and Director
before, so it is a severe Judge *after* Action: *Re-
 flexion*, upon what a *Man* has done being the
 inseparable Companion of his *Reason*.

What I would say, is almost self-evident.
 A reasonable *Being*, not acting reasonably,
 must be miserable at present, *before* his *Reason*
 be quite laid asleep; because it is his professed
 Enemy, and a very powerful one: and He
 must be miserable *afterwards*, because his *Rea-
 son* can never dye, and whenever it *wakes* (as
 it most certainly will) must be a very uneasy
 Companion to Him. The *Happiness* of *Men*,
 therefore, or of understanding Beings capable
 of *moral Agency*, must necessarily depend upon
 their acting according to the Rules of *Reason*:
 and the lasting Satisfaction of Creatures, en-
 dowed with *Reflexion* and *Conscience*, must
 consist in the behaving themselves so, that
Reflexion and *Conscience* may not be armed
 against them. It is not *Riches*, or *Honours*,
 or any thing *without*, that can give a lasting
 Ease

Ease of Mind, which is *Happiness*, to such SERM. Beings; but *That* must always be founded XX. upon something *within* their own Breasts. 

If they have not their own *Reason*, their *Bosom Friend*, they cannot be *happy*; and this They cannot have, without acting reasonably: And if They have their own *Reason*, which is always present with them, their internal Enemy, They must be *miserable*; and this They cannot but have, if they act *unreasonably*. I proceed to observe,

3. That what the *Gospel* calls *Sin*, and *Iniquity*, is, in every particular Instance of it, the Transgression of the Laws of *Reason*; and that what is there called *Righteousness* and *Holiness*, is always, truly speaking, *reasonable*, and becoming. For, if that *Reason*, which distinguishes us from Beasts, assures of any one thing, it assures us of this; That the *Imitation* of *God*, who is the most perfect understanding Nature, in all his moral Perfections, is what we ought to study. And this is what our *Blessed Lord* came to teach Men; to become the *Children of God*, by being (according to their Capacity) *perfect as he is perfect*, and *holy as he is holy*, and *merciful as he is merciful*; and in their whole moral Behaviour, as *like to Him* as possible.

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What I mean is, that every Particular of those *Moral Duties* which our *Saviour* and his *Apostles* lay so great a stress upon, has the Voice of *Reason* on its side; and *this*, not now and then, but constantly. There never was, nor ever can be, a Time supposed, when uncorrupted *Reason* does not determine that *Justice, Piety, Temperance, Chastity, Humility, Beneficence, Placability*, and the like, are what we ought to study and practice; and that *Injustice, Oppression, Intemperance, Impurity, Pride, Unmercifulness, Revenge*, and the like, are what we ought to abhor, and fly from. And, what very much confirms the Truth of this, He who most attends to, cultivates, and improves, his *Reason*, is always most strongly persuaded of this: and None are found to be of the contrary Opinion, but Such as had first sacrificed their *Reason* to their *Appetites*; Such as make their own Lusts and worldly *Affections* the Measure of their *Actions*, and ask their *Passions* what is *reasonable*. And thus, if we consult our own Breasts, we shall find the Matter to be, That this *inward Companion* never fails to applaud us every Step we take in the Paths of *Virtue*: and, on the other hand, 'till we have made ourselves insensible, never fails, not only to warn and recall us, when we are going into

the

the Paths of *Vice*; but, *after* we have transgressed the Laws of *Virtue*, to give us all the Uneasiness the *Reflexion* upon the greatest Act of *Imprudence* can give an understanding Being.

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And, even supposing it strictly *possible* that considering Persons might have learnt their *Duty* and their *Happiness*, competently well, from this *Book of Reason* duly studied; yet, with regard to the whole Body of Mankind, the *Best* not excepted, We ought always to esteem it, as a most divine Part of the Design of our *Blessed Lord's* appearing in the World, to call upon Men in an extraordinary Manner, the more effectually to awaken Them to a due Sense of what *Prejudice*, *Education*, and the *Temptations* of a wicked World, might, otherwise, too probably hide from their View. And now,

4. The plain and natural Consequence from what has been said is this, That *Sin* and *Iniquity* are the proper *Unhappiness* of Man; and *Virtue* and *Goodness* his only lasting and substantial Happiness. For, since Man is a Creature endowed with *Reason*, which directs and judges; acquits, or condemns Him; and therefore, cannot be *Happy* without the *Approbation*, and must be *miserable* under the *Condemnation*, of it: And since what the *Gospel* calls *Sin* and *Iniquity* is the Trans-

SERM. gression of the *Laws of Reason*, and stands
 XX. condemned, and Righteousness approv-
 ed, in our own Breasts; it follows that
 ~~~~~ *Iniquity* must lay the Foundation of *Mi-*  
*sery in Man*, because it arms his *Reason*  
 against him; and that the Practice of Vir-  
 tue must be his only proper, or true, *Sat-*  
*isfaction*, because it is what his own *Mind*,  
*that is*, He himself, never fails to recom-  
 mend and applaud. I come now to the *Con-*  
*clusion* of the Argument, which is the *Last*  
 of the Propositions I laid down at the Be-  
 ginning of this Discourse: *viz.*

III. That, therefore, if *Jesus* be the *Messiah*,  
 as We justly believe, the great *Design* of his  
 coming *must be to turn Us* from our Iniquities;  
 to restore Reason and Religion to their right-  
 ful Authority over Mankind; and to make all  
 Virtue and true Goodness flourish in the  
 Earth.

For, supposing the Nature of *Man* to be  
 such as is before described; and his *Reason*,  
 or *Conscience*, to be the Judge of his Happi-  
 ness; and supposing Him to be working out  
*Misery* for Himself, by transgressing the plain  
 and express *Laws of his Reason*, (which is too  
 true;) *This* is the greatest *Happiness* he is ca-  
 pable of; absolutely necessary to his inward  
*Peace*; and the only proper Method of  
*Salvation*

Salvation to be wished for by such a Being. S E R M.  
If there be any Force in all that has been .XX  
said, To turn him from his Iniquity, is to ~~~~~  
turn him from his Misery; To save him  
from his Sins, is, to save him from his  
greatest Enemy; To direct him to the  
Paths of Virtue, is to put him into a cer-  
tain Method of being at Peace with his  
own Mind, which is Himself: And to lay  
the Foundation of his Happiness upon this  
Rock, is to deal with Man, as Man;  
as a reasonable and thinking Creature, who  
lives a few Hours in a World where every  
thing is uncertain but what he possesses within  
himself; and is hastening to Another never-  
ending State, in which the good Temper of  
his own Soul must be the Measure of all the  
Happiness He can hope for.

We may, then, very safely conclude, That  
no Design but *This* could have been so much  
for the Happiness of Man; or so certain a  
Demonstration of the Love of God to Him;  
or so worthy of the great Undertaking of the  
*Messiah*, and of the Character he was to bear,  
of being the greatest Blessing God could  
bestow, or Man receive.

Nay, if We may have leave to make a  
*Supposition* so unbecoming, and yet so agre-  
able to Jewish Prejudices; If our Lord had

SERM. come, on any other Errand; and appeared  
 XX. with all that Pomp of Majesty the *Jews*  
 expected: If He had confirmed *Them*,  
 in all temporal Prosperity; led captive  
*Nations* in Triumph through their Streets;  
 and made *Them* drunk with the Blood of  
 their *Enemies*: If such as these, I say, had  
 been his Designs; the *Jews* of that Age (if  
 they had argued aright) might have found  
 strong and reasonable *Prejudices* against Him;  
 and rejected him without that *Guilt* which  
 They then brought themselves under. For,  
 truly speaking, what a poor *Attempt* would  
*This* have been, and how small an Advance to  
 their true Happiness? What a mighty Bless-  
 ing would it have been to such a Creature a  
*Man*, to be put in Possession of all the Earth-  
 ly Honour and Grandeur imaginable, to have  
 lived a few Days in *Pomp* and *State*, and  
 then gone off the *Stage*, not only with the  
 more Unwillingness, but with a Mind quite  
 unprepared for the Good things of *Another*  
 State, in which no such vain Appearances can  
 have any Place? Or, to have been encompas-  
 sed with all the *Riches* the greatest *Luxury*  
 could desire, in a World from which He him-  
 self was soon to be separated? Or, what great  
*Satisfaction* could it be, to *Him*, to see all his  
*Temporal Enemies* conquered; if He himself



is subdued by worse Enemies; and is that SERM. miserable Slave, who is every Day doing XX. those things which He cannot but condemn himself for doing; and which arm his own Conscience against Him?

Thus far, then, we have proceeded; and the Argument stands thus. The *Messiah* was to be the Author of the *Greatest Blessing* Men are capable of. The *Greatest Blessing* human Nature is capable of, consists in the *Practice* of all that is good and virtuous. Therefore the great Design of the coming of *Jesus Christ*, into the World, must be to turn every one of Us from our Iniquities, as *St. Peter* in the *Text* affirms.

I shall now make some *Observations*, and draw some *Inferences*, which seem naturally to offer themselves from what has already been said.

1. The *first* is, That our *Blessed Lord* himself, and his immediate Followers, give an Account of the *Nature* of his *Blessing*, exactly agreeable to what has been already argued, from the *Frame* of *Man*, and the *Voice* of *Reason*.

As for *Himself*; He professed himself indeed, a *King*, by professing himself the *Messiah*. But then, He took all Occasions to

SERM. avoid whatever might look as if He thought  
 xx. of erecting an *Earthly Kingdom*; and very  
 ~~~~~ severely to rebuke his *Disciples* for their gross  
 Notions of the *Nature* of his Design; and
 to assure them, before hand, that, instead of
 earthly Glory and Grandeur, He himself was
 to meet with Scorn, and Contempt, and Re-
 proaches, and Death; and that *They* must not
 think to escape better than their *Master*.
 Agreeably to this, when he was accused before
Pilate, He acknowledged, indeed, that He
 was that very *King* the *Jews* were taught to
 expect; but at the same time, He solemnly
 professed that *His Kingdom was not of this*
World, (*John xviii. 36.*) And his whole *Life*,
 and *Doctrine*, spake the same thing.

And his *Apostles*, who were to preach
 the *Gospel* of *His Kingdom* to all Nations;
 how carnal soever in their Apprehensions of
 things They were, at first; as soon as He
 had opened their Eyes, and taught them
 the Truth, and poured forth his *Spirit* upon
 Them, we find Them so far from expecting
 worldly Pomp and Glory, as *his Disciples*,
 that They looked for nothing but *Persecution*,
Bonds, *Imprisonment*, and even *Death* itself.
 And their *Notions* of their *Master's Kingdom*
 were so altered, that their constant *Declarati-*
ons, after his *Resurrection*, were, That the
 great

great Design of the appearing of the Son of S E R M.
God was, *to destroy the Works of the De-* XX.
vil, the great Adversary to all Virtue; That
the great End of the *Life*, and *Death*,
and *Resurrection*, of *Christ*, was to *teach* all
Men to *deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and
to *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this pre-*
sent World, as an absolutely necessary Condi-
tion of their *future Happiness*. These, and
the like Declarations, scattered through
every *Page* of the *New Testament*, evi-
dently shew, that neither our *Lord*,
nor his *Apostles*, knew of any greater
Blessing He was to bestow upon *Men*, than
the *turning them from their Iniquities*; and
that *This* was really the *Blessing*, with which
He was sent by God to *bless* the World.

2. From what has been said, it appears,
that the *Jews*, who rejected our Lord, had
but a very *slender* and weak Excuse to make for
this, from the Manner in which the *Prophets*
spake of this great Person.

It cannot indeed, be denied that their An-
cient *Prophets* set forth the *Messiah* sometimes
in a most *lofty* and exalted Style; and repre-
sent *Him*, as a *King*, the Extent of whose
Kingdom, should be the whole Earth; and
as a *Prince*, sitting upon the *Throne* of *David*,
with a *Sceptre*, and all the *Ensigns* of Royal
Authority;

SERM. Authority; vested with sufficient Power to
 XX. destroy the Enemies of his People; and the
 like. But it is true also, that, in the same
 Prophets, there are so many *Passages* allowed to belong to the same Person, which either describe his Kingdom as of quite another Nature than the *Kingdoms* of this World; or *Himself*, as a *Man* in a *low* and *suffering* Condition; that Many of the *Jews* themselves were reduced to the *Necessity* of inventing *Two Messiahs*, to answer to these different *Descriptions*; when, by a due Consideration, They might reasonably have applied all to One and the same Person. And *this* They would naturally have done, if They had not been too much debauched in all their *Principles*, and *Practise*, to be disposed to consider either the Nature of GOD; or the Frame of Man, and the Dictates of the common *Voice* of their own Reason, in Matters of such a Kind.

For Proof of this, it may be observed, That it would not have been very hard for serious Persons to have accounted for all such lofty and figurative *Descriptions* of their *Prophets*, after such a Manner as this. There is a *Spiritual Kingdom*, as well as a *Temporal* one: And He who reigns in the Hearts of his Subjects is a *King* and *Lord*, as much as the greatest *Potentate*

tentate on Earth: There are *Enemies* to the S E R M.
Spiritual and *Eternal* Happiness of Man, as XX.

well as to his *present* Ease and Prosperity: And These are the same, with regard to the true and proper Happiness of *Man*, that earthly Tyrants are, to his worldly Peace and Quiet: and *He*, who subdues these, and delivers us from them, is the same, with respect to our real and substantial Happiness, as a *good Prince*, who rescues us from the Tyrants of this World, is, with respect to all our temporal Enjoyments. And therefore, if their antient *Prophets*, in representing the spiritual Kingdom of the *Messiah*, make use of *Words* which signify the greatest *Blessing*, and *Glory*, in *sensible* Matters; if He be said to have his *Throne* and his *Sceptre*; if the *Enemies* he is to subdue, are spoken of by the *Prophets* in the same *Terms* by which *Temporal Enemies* are described; if his redeeming us from their Power is represented by such *Words*, as *Conquests*, *Victories*, and *Triumphs*; this is justified by the Use of very high *Figurative* Expressions, upon many Occasions, in *all*, but especially the *Eastern*, *Languages*; without the Thought that such Expressions would be taken *literally*; or that Those, who were most concerned in them, would not make use of their *Common Sense*, in

S E R M. the Interpretation of Them. The *Jews* in-
 XX. deed knew this *Figurative Style* to be almost
 always the *Prophetic Style*; and not to be interpreted, in other Cases, according to the *Letter*: and therefore, might have learned another, and a true, Doctrine from such *Figures of Speech*. And this they were still more directed to do, in the present Case, by many *plain Expressions* in several Passages of the *Prophets*, mixed with the *Lofty and Metaphorical* ones, and necessarily interpreting them: Such, I mean, as represented the Dispensation of their *Messiah* to have been designed to *make an End of Sin*, and *bring in everlasting Righteousness*; and such as give *This peculiar Character* of it, that under it *God would write his Laws in the Hearts* of his *People*; and *remember their Sins no more*; and Others of the like Sort. All which is fully sufficient to shew the Guilt of that Infidelity of the *Jews*, which was owing to their total and wilful Neglect of such Considerations, as ought to have directed their Thoughts, and influenced their Conduct, upon this Occasion.


3. It will not be improper to observe, That what has been said may lead Us to the true Sense of those *Figurative Expressions* in the *New Testament*, relating to this same *Blessing*
 of

of the *Messiah*, which have caused great VASERM. riety of Sentiments and Debates. I mean particularly such seemingly hard Phrases as, *being* XX. *born again; being created again to good Works; renewed in our Minds; putting off the old Man, or the whole Body of Sin; and putting on the new Man, in all Holiness and Righteousness; being dead with Christ unto Sin, and arising again with Him to a new Life: and other extraordinary Forms of Speech to the same Purpose.* All these are justly and truly explained by the plain Phrases of *ceasing from Sin, and Learning to do Righteousness*; and, in the Words before Us, by being turned *from our Iniquities to all Virtue*; by leading a *new Life* of habitual Holiness: and set forth no other Doctrine than that *the Blessing of the Messiah* consisted in calling the World from their former customary Sins, to the *Practice* of all the *Duties of moral Righteousness*.

4. From what has been said may justly be concluded the *Presumption* and *Iniquity*, of that *Church*, which assumes to itself the Privilege of *blessing* Christians in a way absolutely contradictory to what is laid down in the *Text*, and other Places of the New Testament. What I mean is This. Our *Lord* and his *Apostles* declare his *Blessing* to consist in the making Us happy, by *turning* Us from
all

SERM. all our *Iniquities*. A Body of Men, calling
 XX. themselves *his Disciples*, and even *his only*
 Disciples, stand forth, and openly undertake
 and promise to *Sinners*, That *They* will *bles*s
 and *save* them, *without* their being *turned from*
their Iniquities; without *one* Mark of their
Conversion through their past Lives; or one
 Mark of it, in their last Hours, unless it be a
 Declaration of their Sorrow. And *this*,
 which has no Relation to their *Conversion*
 from their *Iniquities* to a Course of *Righteous-*
ness, They profess to make *Equivalent* to a
 past good Life; and, by some Methods in-
 vented by themselves, warrant the Arrival of
 their Disciples at *Happiness*, as effectually as
 if they had spent many Years in Obedience to
 the Laws of God. *This*, and the like *Doc-*
trines of *Indulgences*, and *Pardons*, for the
 Encouragement of *Sinners* in not *being turned*
from their Iniquities, are such manifest and di-
 rect Contradictions to the whole Tenor of our
Lord's own *Declarations*, that there cannot
 be the least Need of one Word to recommend
 such *Blasphemy* to the Abhorrence of all
Christians, besides the bare Mention of them.

5. Others, who have separated from so
 polluted a *Church*, may learn not to imitate,
 in the least Degree, One of the worst Practi-
 ces in that Communion which they have
 forsaken.

forfaken. And how near to this *Presumption* of S E R M.
the *Church of Rome* They come, who take XX.
upon them to administer the Comforts of 
GOD'S Mercy in *Christ*, under the Terrors of
Death, to Those who have willfully stood
out against all the most powerful Motives to
Amendment through their whole past Lives,
let themselves judge: but let Them first con-
sider how fatal to *Living Sinners* it may
prove, to see such Encouragement given to
the *Hopes of Dying Ones*; and how naturally
This must lead Those who are Witnesses to
it, to think assuredly of *Salvation* and *Mercy*
at last, without being *turned from their Ini-*
quities in any Part of their former Life. Who
must answer for This great *Injury* to the *Gos-*
pel, and to the *Men* themselves chiefly con-
cerned, but *They*, who are at any Time
guilty of prostituting the *Doctrine of Salva-*
tion from *Sin*, to the Service of *Sin* itself;
and substitute a *Repentance*, which is only a
Sorrow, and *Dread of Punishment*, into the
Place of that *Repentance*, which is *Amend-*
ment of Life; and which *alone* their Lord and
Master declares to be acceptable?

6. Lastly. Let this practical Argument be
ever in our Minds. If this *turning of Us from*
our Iniquities be the *Blessing* which Reason it-
self teaches us to expect from *Him*, who

SERM. was to be the greatest Instance of GOD'S Mercy to *Sinners*; if This be what the *Jews* themselves had Reason to look for, from their *Messiah*; if This be the serious and constant Declaration of our *Lord* himself, and the settled Doctrine of his *Apostles*; it follows most certainly, That *We* are not to hope for any *Blessing* from our *Saviour Jesus*, the *Christ*, or *Messiah*, but as we are *turned from our Iniquities* to the Practice of all *Virtue*; That, without this indispensable Condition, we have no Title to the Rewards promised by Him; nay, That against those professed *Christians* who still keep their *Iniquities*, the *Messiah* himself will pronounce the *Wrath* of GOD; *Depart from Me, ye Workers of Iniquity.*

The *Conclusion* of the whole, and the *Sum* of all that most nearly concerns Us, We must always remember to be This, *If we know these Things, happy are We only, if we do them.*

F I N I S.

